

NOSTRE MANES
SUNT INFANTES.IT'S ALL HERE &
IT'S ALL TRUE.

Philadelphia Independent

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ON THE SUBWAY.BEHOLDEN TO
NO ONE.

VOLUME ONE, ISSUE NO ELEVEN

SEPTEMBER 2003

50 cents IN PHILA. \$1 ELSEWHERE

ON GRIMY AUGUST, THE MOST HATED OF ALL THE MONTHS

Sweat, Blackouts, & Creeps
for 31 Days Straight. Hail Autumn
Fairest, the Second Spring.

A SICK & SLIMY SEASON'S LONG LAST GASP

BY LOREN HUNT

The dog days of August, they're called, because they bring the kind of heat and humidity that makes human beings behave much like dogs, laying motionless in front of a fan with our tongues lolling out. Nothing moves except the innards of our brains, which chafe under the strain of inactivity. We get ideas, usually bad ones. We get notions, manias, obsessions, diabolical urges, and itches that we cannot scratch. We read bizarre newspaper accounts of crimes of passion and frustration and fatal freak accidents, and these stories strike us as more appropriate than unnerving. It's the sort of weather that could easily melt our sanity down into madness. When lightning is not always an indication of rainfall, and rainfall is not a respite from the heat; when the exertion of sweating distracts us from our vocations; when the sensation of hovering on the verge of something unnamed tickles the edges of the mind no matter how many beers we drink, we know the dog days are upon us and there is some enduring to be done.

A little girl who lives on my street sneaks up behind me as I walk home from work one afternoon and says, "I'm going to rob you!" She's seven or eight years old, and wakes the neighborhood up every morning with her loud, off-key renditions of popular R&B tunes. I offer her a listless half-smirk in reply. "No really, I'm going to rob you!" she hisses like a sitcom gangster. "Take care of yourself!" she calls after me as I enter my house. It's not cute; it's weird. This incident gives me goosebumps for the rest of the night.

An old lady falls down across the street from my job, where my co-workers and I are staring out the window, business being slow this time of year. When we rush out to help her, she squeals incoherently, giggling, her birdlike mouth wide open to reveal a chipped set of dentures. She reeks of booze. Her frail legs are played, summer dress hiked up over her knees, and she refuses to allow anyone to help her up. When one of my co-workers insists, she curses him out and veers off into the middle of the street, where we leave her to find her own way, wherever she's going.

Underground flooding knocks out Center City's electric supply one morning. Traffic lights cease

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SAVE THE NEWSBOXES

OUR CENTER CITY NEWSBOXES:
BORN JANUARY 2002
GONE SEPTEMBER 2003?

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Note During a Rainy Season

BY ALEXANDER SWARTWOUT

"The Sun is trying to come out." In a miserable, rainy month, this piece of nonsense has been uttered by a million compulsive optimists. I do not know how the Sun ever became these peoples' darling, that they root for it like a child in a potato-sack race. Reason suggests this is a futile exercise: the Sun is an immense orb of burning plasma, indifferent to space, a gargantuan of gravity. It churns with fusion on a scale inconceivable to a three-pound brain. The Sun does not try to do anything—it is not even aware that at any given moment it isn't out. If the Sun were ever introduced to any of these puny, terrestrial sympathizers, it would thoughtlessly incinerate them with such haste that our standards of timekeeping could not account for it.

It might please some to explain away the torments of the climate as the frivolity of a few immense, jovial characters, roly-poly in the sky like a gigantic family picnic, the uncles out on the flag-football field. But it does not alter the fact that this is a delusion which saps at the imagination and focuses stress onto a subject which does not respond to concern: the weather. It is not this paper's desire to quash the giddy dreams of stargazers, but it becomes necessary when the American small-talk has suffered such a long drought of novelty as it has this remarkably rainy summer, threatening the public intellect entirely.

ASTEROID FLIRTS BUT WILL NOT KISS EARTH

No matter what the heavens say, Earth will survive to see the year 2015. Early this month, scientists at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory had given Asteroid 2003 QQ47, a rock more than a kilometer wide, better than 1,000,000-to-1 odds of sending us the way of the dinosaurs. But after a few prominent members of the species grew concerned about the prospect of their own extinction, NASA's mariners of the void wiped the stardust off their spyglasses and shifted the line to 2,000,000-to-1, much to the relief of bond-holders and tidy persons everywhere. Is it vain for us to believe that Providence is something more than a cosmic bookie, maybe even a benevolent older sibling like the Silver Surfer, who looks out for us when trouble is headed our way? Perhaps, but we already have plenty of possible apocalypses to concern ourselves with. After putting so much effort into our own awful juggernauts, death by asteroid would be like shutting off the theater's lights just when the tragedy's final act is set to begin.

BOB BRADY WON'T LET GOLDEN DEMS SLIP

CITY HALL—In a letter to 2,500 of the party faithful late last month, city Democratic chairman Robert Brady urged municipal employees with patronage jobs to take a more active role in the mayoral race, warning them that "the only thing the GOP has increased is the number of jobs they're handing out to Republicans ... What do you think they'll do to your job or your friends' jobs if they take City Hall?" Indeed, a couple months of campaigning is a small price to pay for four years of Minesweeper at eighteen bucks an hour. But the recent case of City employee Tumar Alexander, who was punished early this month for campaigning on the clock, sends a very different message. Along with Mayor John Street's son, Alexander visited Sam Katz's campaign office at 22nd and Cecil B. Moore and yelled at Katz's landlord. A few hours later, an alleged firebomb was thrown through the window of the office. Now Alexander has been suspended for a whole week and is out \$1,700 in pay. It may be time for a Brady/Street summit to sort out these mixed signals.

obituary

Frank 'Smockey' LaMassa

947 E. Passyunk Avenue

BY CHRISTINE SMALLWOOD

In his last years, after he had sold what had been Smockey's to those who would call it Low Bar, Frank LaMassa was bored. He passed time taking his close friends on drives in his Cadillac, pointing out where Billie Holiday had stayed and which buildings had, at one time, served as pleasure houses. He fed bread to the ducks and nuts to the squirrels. He rarely ventured farther than Wildwood. Perhaps, he feared, he had sold the bar too soon.

On June 28, 2003, Philadelphia lost Frank Smockey to lung cancer and an assortment of other ills, including leg ailments caused by a lifetime of standing. He was born in the third floor apartment above the bar, in the room whose bathtub now overflows with tools and junk. From his early youth until October 2000, when he sold 947 E. Passyunk for \$90,000, he stood behind that bar. He started helping out his dad until he was the owner, working six nights a week, New Year's Eve included. His sister Genevieve covered the day shift while he rested and ate in their lifelong home on Kimball Street.

When Frank's father died, he inherited not just the bar, Smockey's, but the nickname, Smockey. LaMassa Senior originally chose the moniker to blend in with what was a predominantly working-class Polish neighborhood. Most of the first patrons, as well as those of the last decade, never called father or son by any other name.

No one could ever mistake the Low Bar of today with the Smockey's of the past forty years, what with the new crowd, modern signage, and recently discontinued Simpsons trivia competitions. But yet, on a recent Friday afternoon, three men sat at the bar and shared what they remembered of the place's late former owner.

Frank Junior broke some of his father's traditions—he bought the first stools for what had previously been a lean, stand, and spit joint and discontinued the 5 to 7 A.M. Eye Opener for the police and fire station across the street. Other traditions he revised. While his father had used a steam table to serve up enormous crabs and meatballs, Frank satisfied the regulation of the Department of Licenses and Inspections that bars must serve food with an assortment of canned soups and vegetables, none of which were ever touched.

Two factors interfere with people's memories about Frank Smockey: age and alcohol. Ask a question about the son and you'll get an answer about the father. Narratives trail off, lost. From the regulars, a lot of rueful smiles, resigned head shakes, and comments like, "He was a great guy." One takes off his cap and grins wide, says that in his

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ECASTRO'S CASTLE WALLS TUMBLE TO THE KING OF POP

"Billie Jean, Ella No Est Mi Novia,
Ella Solo Es Una Niña...
Pero El Bambino No Es Mío."

HOW CUBA'S KIDS LEARNED TO MOONWALK

BY HENRY WILLIAM
BROWNEJOHNS

BARACOA, Cuba—Baracoa is on the easternmost shore of Cuba—where Columbus arrived at the island—and thus a visitor to it is likely to spend much of his time perched along the seaway, musing historically. It has been my good fortune to spend three intermittently rainy days here, at a house only three streets in from the waterfront promenade, or malecon (the town is only so large that the furthest a house can get from the water is six or seven streets), and so when the rain has let up for an hour here and there, I go to see the sea. There I spend a few minutes jerking my head round toward the water and back toward the lush inland mountains, straining to sympathize with the circumstances of that first shipload of Spanish explorers.

And, as is the way throughout Cuba whenever a curious figure stands still too long, a local inevitably sidles up and strikes up conversation. This particular time I am approached by a schoolboy of fifteen or sixteen, his occupation given away by the ochre pants he, like every other secondary-schooler on the island, wears (grade-schoolers are in navy blue, and intermediate-graders sport maroon). It is the middle of a weekday, but I have long since ceased the concerns of the truant officer—Cuban schoolchildren spend only a minority of their school day actually in such a place. Between a session in the morning and another in the evening, the students, still in uniform, learn their lessons swimming and strolling and chasing each other through the streets. Take considerable salt with the claims of the Revolution on their progress in education—it is said by Cubans that everybody can read, but nobody bothers to.

The student who now accosts me is named Richard, and he is more enterprising in his spare time; he carries around a pocketful of red coral necklaces, hoping to sell them to a defenseless foreigner for a few dollars. Young Richard shows me his wares, and insists on their quality; I show no interest, and explain first how I have heard from concerned citizens that the local coral is not to be taken out of the seabed, lest the ecology go haywire, and second how I am not the sort of gentleman inclined to wear jewelry.

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FIVE YEAR DIARY

... Landslide's house had fun. JANUARY 10TH, 1960: Terribly cold. Got up had a bath. Took tape down to Diane's. Nice little flat. Recorded wedding. Lunch at Uncle Reg's. Hospital. Uncle Joe visited Daddy. Went to tea with Aunt Babs. Came home and had supper. Watched TV. JANUARY 11TH, 1960: Went up to tower with Milly. Went to see Gortings did not really like it. Went on to West End. Lunch in Seldridges. Went to News Theatre. Came home. Went to see Daddy. He is fine. Mike also fine. JANUARY 12TH, 1960: Miss Shaw in. Louise came in. Went and bought flowers for Auntie Babs birthday. Had a pink rose on my hair. We took flowers to Auntie Babs then went to hospital. Daddy put in room on his own. Mike much better. JANUARY 13TH, 1960: Helped Lil to tidy up. Got own lunch. Did not go to hospital. Went to Brighton with Ken to get new projector. Had sandwiches in Transport cafe. Came home. Roads icy. Watched TV. Fell asleep went to bed ...

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THE SAFE STREETS INTERVIEWS: BEAT COPS ON OVERTIME, DRUGS, MONEY, MARRIAGE & THE MAYOR

Mayor Street Fights Crime w/ Overtime

Operation Safe Streets is one of the flagship programs of Mayor John Street's administration. Safe Streets began in May 2002 when the Philadelphia Police Department began intensively patrolling the city's most drug-ridden areas, concentrating their efforts on 300 street corners with prior records of drug arrests and violent crime.

To this date, the Police Department's annual report for 2002 is the only public document that attempts to measure the effects of Safe Streets. According to the report, police confiscated \$81 million worth of illegal drugs between May and December 2002, a four-fold increase over the same period for the previous year. The report also notes significant increases in warrants served, seized vehicles, and confiscated guns.

Overall, the report said, citywide crime is on the decline, with 126,367 crimes reported during the last eight months of 2002, compared to 139,382 during the last eight months of 2001. The same report shows a steady decrease in crime from 1999, three years before Safe Streets began.

In a news conference last October, Mayor Street claimed that Safe Streets was responsible for reducing the number of drug-related homicides to nine during the first four months of 2002, down from fifty-four during the same period of 2001. Later, police reported an increase in drug-related homicides for that period and the mayor's office had to retract the earlier figure, saying that it needed to redefine what counted as a drug-related homicide. This year, homicides are on the rise. The *Inquirer* reported an increase of twenty-two percent compared to last year's rate.

Whether or not Operation Safe Streets has resulted in a citywide decrease in crime, there is no debate about its high financial cost. As reported in the *Inquirer*, Mayor Street estimates that the Safe Streets will cost \$100 million over its five-year lifespan, and it has already cost at least \$53 million in police overtime. Street has not yet revealed the total cost of the program so far.

While targeted neighborhoods appear to have less public drug activity, critics of Safe Streets charge that the program siphons police attention away from other neighborhoods, and that drug dealers are simply taking their business indoors. Republican mayoral candidate Sam Katz has called Safe Streets "scarecrow policing" that keeps drug dealing out of sight but fails to get at the root of the problem. Instead, the Katz campaign favors longer mandatory sentences for drug dealers and violent criminals, sending more criminals through the tougher federal court system, and building a new state prison in Philadelphia. A state prison in Philadelphia, Katz argues, will relieve the city's overburdened prison system and provide jobs.

Mayor Street and Police Commissioner Sylvester M. Johnson maintain that Safe Streets is effective. They point not only to police crime statistics, but also to anecdotal evidence like responses from individual neighbors. Responding to Katz's criticisms, a spokesman for Mayor Street told the *Inquirer* that the program should not be judged on its high cost, saying "I dare Sam Katz to put a dollar figure on these peoples' lives."

How Life on the Police Force Has Changed Under the Controversial Anti-Crime Program

Cops Camp Out On Corners; Dealers Flee Indoors

BY BERNARD VAUGHAN

We've heard Mayor John Street, Police Commissioner Sylvester M. Johnson, and Street's political rivals and neighborhood residents debate the merits of Operation Safe Streets almost every day in the media, but what about the patrol officers who actually police those streets? What do the police on the street think about the program that has put them on some of the city's most dangerous corners? I talked with two officers I'll call Eric and Chris about their experiences working Safe Streets. Both have been on the force between two to five years, and both have worked the operation on and off since its inception in May 2002. Both are based in precincts in the police force's North Central Division, home to some of the most volatile and dilapidated neighborhoods targeted by the costly, controversial program.

I asked them how Safe Streets changed their everyday life as police officers.

"Stress," said Eric. Recently engaged, Eric picked up as many overtime Safe Streets shifts as possible to pay for his wedding.

"I'm constantly working," said Eric. "Right now, you don't have to pick up the hours, but starting Monday [August 25] we're going to twelve hour days. You have to do it. It's not like you get an option now. Twelve hour days for a lot of people who have kids is tough."

I asked Eric why he thinks the police are going to twelve-hour shifts.

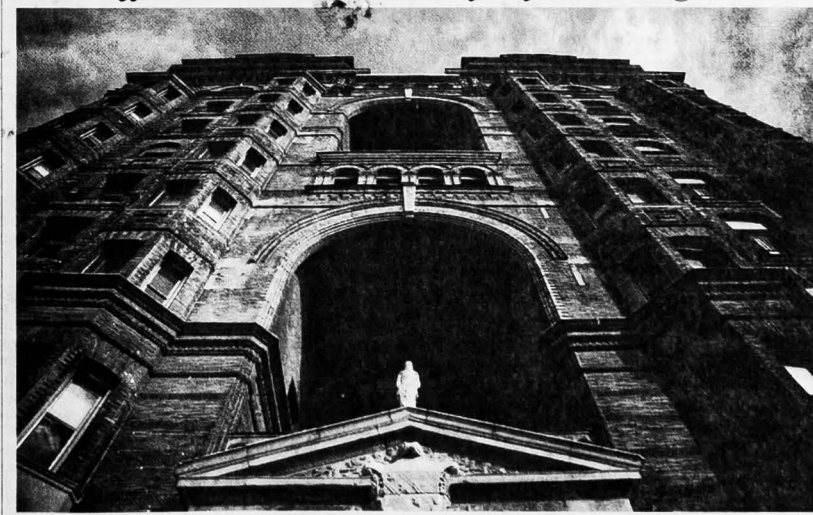
"I'll tell you—this is my honest opinion—we're going to twelve hour days cause he's going to election," said Eric, referring to Mayor Street. "He wants to look good. I guarantee it'll end in November, and we'll go back to the regular overtime as an offering."

What kind of guidance are officers given as to how to go about ridding an area of drugs?

"We're more of a presence so they are not dealing in front of you," said Chris. "Basically, if you see a bunch of dudes on the corner, and ah, you know, they don't have any legitimate business being there, you just sit there. You can ask them to roll or you can sit there, and then they'll roll on their own. They're hanging out in front of a grocery store that's closed, you just ask 'who lives here?'"

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Jeff Elstone Meets the Wife of God: Page 4



Skatepark Plans Inch Forward

LOGAN SQUARE—Mayor John Street arrived via Sport Utility Vehicle Motorcade and found parking in the shade of some trees on a two acre field beside the Schuylkill River that may one day become a free public skatepark. He discussed the future of the project in some detail, including a short tangent on the definition of the term "world-class," which has been somewhat debated by overuse, he said. The mayor expressed his commitment to add the new skatepark to the list of Philadelphia's new world-class amenities, including the Kimmel Center, to which the city gave \$30 million, and Lincoln Financial Field, which received \$346 million. The mayor said that the City will pay for the park's design, which will cost about \$30,000. The remainder of the cost will be laid at the feet of skateboarding activists such as Josh Nims of the Skateboard Advocacy Network. Street pledged that the City would help Nims wrangle dollars from private donors. Mike Levin, the father of a 15-year-old skateboarder, stumbled upon the press conference on his evening jog. "They couldn't have picked a more god-forsaken and isolated place," he said, pointing to the wooded area and the highway on-ramp that surround the site. Of course, the site's relative isolation may be part of its appeal, as Center City police officers and security guards will now have an answer for the question, "well, where can I go then?"

THIS NEWSPAPER CONTAINS

- 1: Miscellaneous News Items.
- 2: THE EDITORS on the Newsboxes, Letters, FAQs.
- 3: Op-Ed by Mr. SWARTWOUT, Continuations.
- 4 & 5: Loren Hunt on Jeff Elstone & Father Major Jealous Divine
- 6: Further Continuations, Advertisements
- 7: Images of Los Angeles Hip-Hop
- 8: PAUL MALISZEWSKI on Stephen Glass
- 9: MARK LOTTO on James Wood
- 10 & 11: Arts & Letters including work by GARY PANTER & MARC BELL
- 12 & 13: WILLIAM PYM on *Maxim*, Ryan McGinley & John Graham
- 14: General Advertisements
- 15: Columns from LORD WHIMSY and GREGG FOREMAN: The Calendar.
- 16: The Bureau of Puzzles & Games, edited by HENRY FLOSS assisted by LADYBIRD.

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The paper that writes
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the phone!

SAVE THE NEWSBOXES

As we write this, five of THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT's newsboxes are sitting on five street corners in Center City. One freezing January night nearly two years ago, these homeless street brutes silently trudged out to their posts to spread the news. Soon they will be evicted, like loitering vagrants who have overstayed their welcome. No more squatting on the corners, no more begging for change. You fellows are ugly. You're interfering with the foot traffic. You can't afford the rent. Please move along now. On Monday, September 15, these five boxes will suck in their chains and crawl off into the night.

Driving them off is the Center City District (CCD), an organization that the Commonwealth has authorized to help manage Center City's public spaces. The CCD assists aimless tourists, picks up litter, arranges for brighter streetlights, and takes out pointed advertisements against panhandling. For the last several years, they have also fought to cure Philadelphia of its millennial newsbox plague. Over the past eight years, newsboxes have spread like steel and plastic fungus, nearly doubling in number to more than 1,376 this year, according to the CCD. So the CCD sat down with representatives from the *Inquirer*, the *Daily News*, *USA Today*, and three of the city's alternative weeklies and hammered out a solution that was agreeable to all parties, at least all parties who were invited to the table. City Council made their plan into law, and the law will start being enforced on September 15. Here are some of its provisions:

The law makes it illegal for THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT to place its newsboxes on any street corner in the area between by Sixth and 21st streets and Spruce and Vine streets. While weekly and daily papers are allowed to have up to three newsboxes on any street corner under certain conditions, publications that come out less than weekly are designated "infrequent publishers" and are subject to special restrictions. They are forbidden from placing a single newsbox on any street corner. They must keep seventy-five feet away from corners and 100 feet away from bus stops. (Mr. Euclid informs us that the average Philadelphia block is about 400 feet long.) These policies discriminate against and violate the First Amendment rights of monthly publications. Any limits placed on the time, place and manner of the right to free press must be applied evenly across the board, whether that right is exercised once a day or once a year.

THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT will be shut out of street corner corrals. Newsboxes at the most crowded corners will be boxed into corrals to be managed by the CCD under the supervision of the Streets Department. The law instructs the CCD to establish "equitable criteria" for deciding who gets these spaces. When we asked CCD Executive Director Paul Levy what those criteria would be, he said the CCD would consider a publication's ability to pay hundreds of dollars per box to finance the corrals' construction. In so doing, the CCD is asking us to pay to publish, as if it were a privilege. But it is not a privilege. It is a right. And discriminating between publishers based on their bank accounts is not "equitable criteria."

Smaller papers must pay higher permit fees. In the event that there are any legal locations left in Center City (tucked safely away from street corners, bus stops, and anywhere else where a newspaper might be able to find a readership) for THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT (five Center City newsboxes, twenty-four total) we will have to pay an annual fee of \$10 per box to secure permits from the City. The law's fee

structure allows larger publishers who have more boxes to pay lower permit fees. The *Philadelphia City Paper* (195 Center City boxes) and *Philadelphia Weekly* (217 Center City boxes) will pay a fee of \$6 to \$7 for each of their newsboxes' permits. Why should we have to pay more? Not only is the City now parceling up and selling off its citizens' First Amendment rights, they are demanding that the quietest voices pay more than their share of the bill.

What are the protocols for new publishers like THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT, who weren't around when this law was drafted? "We haven't figured it out," Levy said. "There may have to be some shifting around."

We hope this shifting around happens quickly. In the meantime, the City has sent us a letter saying it will cut our chains and impound our five boxes, unless we move them to legal locations, far away from any street corner, by September 15.

The CCD "fully recognizes the right of new publishers to be in the marketplace," Levy told us. "We certainly see an ability to work with publishers like you. The purpose [of the law] was not to eliminate freedom of speech but to eliminate overcrowding."

But if the purpose of the law was to eliminate overcrowding, why impose extra rules for the newspapers that have the fewest boxes?

The answer is simple: The bigger publishers wrote the rules. "Since the major publishers were fully involved in shaping this law, you should talk to them," Levy wrote to us in an email.

But perhaps the *Philadelphia Weekly* and *City Paper* could have done a better job checking the fine print on their new bill, as it renders almost every one of their newsboxes illegal. "The box shall weigh no less than eighty (80) pounds, when empty of publications and without added weight," reads the law. Most of the standard tabloid newsboxes used by our city's free weeklies weigh less than seventy pounds when empty. Yet we suspect they'll still be out there on September 16th. There's a term for this: Selective enforcement.

Newsboxes are much more than homeless steel brutes. They are the bottles that keep our messages dry, the stationary for our letters, the towers that send our signal forth. They are canvases for the artists who were generous enough to adorn them with their works. Our newsboxes have introduced us to some of our best writers and readers; they have brought us into contact with some of the individual "I's" that compose the "we" that is THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT.

We need our newsboxes because they connect us to the people and to the city who we are trying to reach. As we wrote in our first issue, a newspaper is "an attempt to discover the inner life of a community, an act of almost sacred importance." Media is much more than a business; it's supposed to be the public's voice and servant, an independent tribune of the people, beholden to no power. That's the wonderful secret about publishing. Don't believe them if they tell you that you need permission, that you need a lot of money, that you need some kind of special permit. All you really need is something to say, and the will to go out and do it yourself. No silly law will ever be able to stop you.

It's easy to forget that nowadays. The Federal Communications Commission has deeded our spectrum to News Corp. and Clear Channel. Knight-Ridder and Gannett are squabbling over who will get to swallow the last of the independently-owned metropolitan daily newspapers. The Center City District seems to agree with these conglomerates that media is just another business and public space is just another marketplace. They're wrong.

PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS:
1026 ARCH STREET, PHILA., PENNA., 19107

We enjoy having visitors, but please call or email first.

HOW TO SUBMIT TO THIS NEWSPAPER

NEWS: We usually do our hard news writing in-house, but if you've got experience, an idea, and a love for the facts, send us a pitch. If you are aware of something newsworthy that we ought to write about, send an email to tips@philadelphiaindependent.net.

ESSAYS, REPORTS, EXPERIMENTS & MISCELLANY: Write up a short proposal containing one or more article ideas and email it to writers@philadelphiaindependent.net, or mail it to the address on the left.

FICTION: We welcome unsolicited fiction. Email fiction@philadelphiaindependent.net, or mail your submission to the address on the left. Mark the envelope to the attention of Loren Hunt, Fiction Editor.

POETRY: We welcome unsolicited poetry. Email poetry@philadelphiaindependent.net or mail your submission to the address on the left. Mark the envelope to the attention of Molly Russakoff, Poetry Editor.

EASY GREEN LIGHT: This is the surest way to get published in THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT: Find a book, a play, a publication, a band, a restaurant, a bodega, a park, a person, or anything else that's in Philadelphia, that's never before been written about, ever, and that you're excited about, and be the very first person to explain in print exactly what this thing is and what makes it so great, in 1,000 words or less.

FINE ART: Send digital files at 300 dpi. You can burn a CD and mail it, or email us a TIFF or JPEG attachment. If that didn't make any sense, call us on the phone, make an appointment, and drop by with originals for us to scan. Digital submissions are preferred. Note that we print in black and white on a flat surface, so color and sculptural works may be difficult to accommodate.

REGARDING THE FIRST PERSON: Unless you believe that we would send a reporter out to write about you, we do not recommend that you submit your writings on yourself.

PLEASE BE PATIENT: We are perpetually behind. If you're mad, please write us an email and say so. Even better, email us and tell us to hurry up before you get mad.

SEND US YOUR STUFF

THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT really likes getting unsolicited material to review. From the demonstrational rock n' roll cassette you composed in your bedroom to the handbound fanzine to the pile of old leaves in the shoebox under your bed, send it all in right away, today, because we want to write about it (see Easy Green Light above). Even if you do publicity for books that are sold by the pallet, bands that appear on television, movies that are shown to strangers, or (this would be so great) Goya canned food products, you can send that stuff along too and we'll promise give it a look and even a graf or two if there's room left over. Our expert critics of cultural items are itching, itching like crazy to put their greasy mits on your baby and set their nuanced and indisputably accurate interpretation of your work into print. This newspaper will announce to the world the existence of your project and decode its import in great detail, using the most up-to-date theories set forth in sentences containing the maximum possible number of clauses and syllables. You may soon find yourself transformed from a creepy weirdo who labors in solitude to the toast of friends and the envy of enemies.

CIRCULATION INFORMATION

If you are interested in carrying THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT in your store, please send an email to rc@philadelphiaindependent.net or telephone 215-351-0777. Our terms are just. THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT is sold at the following locations. Boldface type denotes a new addition.

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DAVE'S FAMOUS DELI - 4th & Bainbridge
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MARATHON GRILL - 1818 Market St.
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THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT, Bureau of Letters, 1026 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Penna. 19107

LETTER TO THE PENTAGON

DEAR PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT:
I found the following document at my place of work. It is transcribed below with spelling and grammatical variations intact. I hope you will find it of interest, and that you will understand my desire to remain,

ANONYMOUS

The Judge Advocate General
United States Army
2200 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-2200

BRIG GENERAL WALTER B. HUFFMAN:
Sir, I plan to get to the Carolinas in the next month roughly around my birthday so to report, I strongly need your support and please stop the security from not allowing me to speak with a commander. I am reporting as "TONTON" and/or Michael, it is vitally important that I get respect and please contact my wife Mrs. Karen McDougal please. I ask that she meet with me their. God bless and please contact the U.S. Attorney's Office, I have been fighting the Italians and several other organize crime/foreign intelligence elements and need the government community to respect my relationship with my wife and those loyal and married to assist us. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

MR. GERALD TODD DAVIS
(Micheal Marshall)
(Micheal McDougal)
Presidential Aid
Department of Defense
Central Intelligence Agency
Federal Bureau of Investigation

- 1) Please investigate "MANHANDLE" an attempt to make gentleman less of men stated by the gay community.
- 2) Please investigate klan/mafia wanting Karen to have sex forcibly by these entities who have a superiority complex and want us to have a dysfunctional relationship/marriage which is proof of their demise from the beginning.
- 3) Please investigate black police/agents wanting me to be a "WHITE BOY" because which is proof that they wanted the klan/mafia tormenting me.
- 4) Please arrest anyone stealing mail so that fellow celebrity stars cannot get responses to them and vice versa.
- 5) Please investigate Ms. Michelle in Woodbridge, Va. When I was talking to her and two other men I stated "Sorry about Sinatra" and we got into an argument and the next day Littleton Colorado happened because they the two Italian men forced that highly intelligent young lady to induce those children to commit murder to show they have a level of power over America after I exposed "Italian Processing" to Congress.
- 6) Like the movie "MATRIX" I may have a worm in my stomach please get rid of it like in Chicago, Illinois. It is to slowly kill.
- 7) The Federal Agents are all aware that I was set-up by some one who did not want me progressive and they still mention that I do NOT have my degree which tells me that they condone Whites Knights and Italian Mafia actions so that they can have
- 8) more ladies, money or maybe just pure racism. Come on gentleman, Gleason has a Hitler mentality, it is a threat to us all. For Example: Ethnic-Cleansing equivalent to Jew massacre, black men "processing" etc.
- 9) Please find out who Stephen King's assailants are and please arrest them because I wanted him to write a book that was made for television exposing this horrid level of espionage encompassing murder. It is rape and slaughter before an American becomes intelligent so that he will be submissive after reaching that plateau rather than turning them into the proper authorities their demise and to educate the public so that we can get America on our side for a "military draft". Please pressure Senate Arms Committee in that regard.
- 10) Please severely discipline the young men at Playboy who disrespected me so that I could not get an interview with Ms. Christie Hefner.
- 11) Ex-black ladies have been trying to give me a induced heart attack by the mafia/klan and having the nerve to apologize. Please severely discipline.
- 12) The klan/mafia at MCI lied and said I had an argument with someone and made up another lie and then when I had a big liner to close they wanted me to go to a class while I was behind and they were stopping me from producing by using the computer so to steal accomplishments. Please fire Jim Brochin and the other Gleasons along with Fran Moncada who wanted me in their bay by coercing another manager who I wanted to be under because I knew they wanted to fire me as soon as they could.
- 13) Arrellno-Feliz, a mafie man and another man that looked like Rodney Davis but white were trying to kill me by cutting my throat. Please investigate. And please severely discipline the hispanic man who was harassing me in front of Jerry Springer and little young lady I believe to have been Karen McDougal but did not know at the time. And one of the hispanic men had a 9 millimeter gun on his hip. Please train me in weapons and explosives sir for Lockerbee and incidents like this one.
- 14) I plan to go to either Fort Bragg or Camp Lajune NC, please give assistance and the President said that he would only help with Camp Lejune and then I'm going to California.
- 15) Please severely discipline the Klan/mafia in California (Thornberr & Stone) and get them behind bars. When in Chicago, I walked past a car and a young lady was given "oral sex" to an Italian pist at me for turning him in, please find out who it was.
- 16) Please investigate Santa Barbara before I get their so that NO foul play is afoot.
- 17) Please investigate Ben Affleck and if he is creating mishap before stardom.
- 18) Please investigate and discipline "CHUMP" in connection with the Moore drug family and selling drugs to make me involuntarily "gay" as I have reported.
- 19) I would like to turn in the "Giddings" and them trying to make me "less of a gentleman" in California for gay Donald.
- 20) I would like to turn in a man on Father's Day for trying to put negative chemical on me and another wanting to kill.
- 21) Reggie White and his wife wanted me

and Karen to have money so during the playoff game I ask that he send me and my wife cash at Senator Hatch's office. But it could not be found.

- 21) Please discipline Mark Petrisko at Déja Vu for trying to kill/rape etc., for the Italians.
- 22) Please investigate the dealer plates on cars as soon as possible.
- 23) Please fire and severely discipline at O'Hare police airport for illegally arresting.
- 24) The American Airlines plane that went down was feeled with body parts of young men that they induce to kill that they use as a form of foreign trade to keep America's enemies alive while resenting a chemical war that induces physical diseases.
- 25) Karen went to New York where she and I and ret. General Colin Powell along with the mayor dropped the crime rate some 70 percent. The son of Gambino was sentenced while working Klan for Karen she assisting working Italian mafir for me. The real organize crime element which use "gay boys" to make girls along with the "White Knights" try to use the movie image to set-up men when the real problem is them being aware while they are NOT and attempting to label when just in the company of an Italian whose job is to kill you. So please discipline "GODFATHER" and "GOODFELLAS" gay community. Attempt to destroy and trick like them.
- 26) To Central Intelligence Agency: Please have the Department of Labor, Dept. of Transportation (FAA) and the Energy Department Investigate Lockerbee and the conspiracies in corporate America. Please I beg you.

MR. GERALD TODD DAVIS
Presidential Aid

This report will be sent to all Generals, intelligence community & several other agencies please read in its *utivity*.

Additional Notes:

Please gentleman read this section:

- 1) Please send my beautiful ladies to Rodney & use them to "flirt" with them please. I likes pretty white ladies.
- 2) Please investigate Christine Calloway Carr or young man at Fudge Bakery sending two young boys to try & kill me with negative intentions. Please investigate it was at Inner Harbor.
- 3) At Kyle Durrah's I was having a verbal nightmare which was induced by possibly Klan or Yakuza so that it would appear that Kyle & I were "homosexual" please investigate.
- 4) Please investigate & severely punish the men who threw me out of Playboy when Karen & several others ladies were posing while working policy. Please it's vitally important.
- 5) I was in the CIA - therefore I have a family relationship with First Family & the Royal Family. Please for that reason give me respect and money and especially get Karen & I together. It was positive ceremony.
- 6) Please discipline "I have no idea" statement used to through me off.
- 7) Please discipline that the Klan places sweaters over the "Butts" because they do not like me looking at them because I enjoy pretty white & black ladies butts. Please investigate that level of conspiracy to promote racism & ignite Klan & discipline.
- 8) Please discipline "snot nose" & "monkey" both forms of immature intelligence to humiliate while accomplishing challenging intelligence programs/project to better secure America.
- 9) Please investigate why someone ask me to be Mark Fuhrman's brother so to steal accomplishments when they used me to deal or make a deal to get OJ Simpson off. They stated You can have the other one" please severely discipline.
- 10) Please investigate Klan man at St. Micheal Cathedral in Chicago who fed me BBQ - it was possible human flesh & spitting in food & placing on the floor before serving at places that I go.
- 11) To the United States Marine Corp: Please severely discipline Director Freeh for keeping me "on the streets" in danger after being aware of "white knights setting me up", possibly calling me a "Boy" and allowing deputy sheriffs, organize crime & other elements to kick me out of places & not respecting my wife/lady & I & our love for one another. Please fire if necessary.
- 12) Someone is trying to steal & destroy my feet. Please rectify.
- 13) The FBI/CIA & Military white ladies bought new cars for me & Klan/mafia police illegally accused me while trying to set-me up & forced them to buy for them out of jealousy. Please send to Federal prison.

GHAZAL: EAST JERUSALEM

A one-wheel cart rattles cobblestone,
fallen dates flattening as we push

deeper into the dusky warren of the market.
Mandrake has taken root in its shade: vines push

a marrow of stems across a butcher's
counters. The push-

cart lurches, we navigate a tunnel of suspended
torsos. I push

against a rack of beef, its ribs
some kind of stringed instrument. Gnats push

into nipple-skin mobiles. We remember
how difficult the push

to breathe here. Imprecise red cauliflowers
mark our ground. Bloodstone soil, a push,

grease for our passage, we rattle
towards light, leave, pushed.

—ARIELLA COHEN

PLEASE JOIN US ON FRIDAY, SEPT. 12, AT 18TH & WALNUT, 12 NOON

We'll be holding a brief ceremony to salute our newsboxes' twenty months of outstanding service, and to mark the last few days of unfettered monthly newspapering in Philadelphia. We'll also take in the fresh cold autumn air, maybe do a little reading, pass out snacks, hang out, and answer questions. Hope to see you there! To read the full text of the newsbox ordinance online, visit: <http://www.localawpub.com/99-2Update/09-0211.html>.

SELLING POWER FOR PROFIT

**Deregulation and Greed, Not Human Error
Are the Real Causes of this Summer's Blackout.**

BY ALEXANDER SWARTWOUT

This author in particular had heard a weather report a few days before the weekend of the late black-out which called for temperatures above ninety degrees Fahrenheit, which were to be the first such sultry days of an otherwise cool year, and he decided to vacate the city, half-seriously thinking there would be a power failure; for there is, whether the wider world knows it or not, a blackout in New York City absolutely every summer, when the weather gets particularly hot. So I am afraid I cannot serve as a useful correspondent on the historic outage just passed, as I was enjoying the temperate evenings and the stable alternating current in the mountains of the Mid-Atlantic.

But I feel qualified still to comment on the masochistic reflex of the Congress in the aftermath. Indeed, with the lights off in the Northeast, I pondered the whole affair and actually decided this might be the death-knell of the conservative government's industry-coddling, which had already somehow survived Enron, Vice President Dick Cheney's criminal corporate favoritism, and sundry other crimes against decency. Now de-regulation and its concurrent plutocratic nepotism had eroded the national infrastructure badly enough that the precious *East* had suffered its effects (as opposed to the disposable land of California, whose mass-blackouts of years past have already faded into anecdote).

But as a confused public awaits an explanation that they can understand (and might even expect a solution to relieve this newly-seeded anxiety about the dependability of their televisions and microwave ovens), the negligent Congress and the hostile Administration have instead stooped to obfuscation, and now have spun the blackout into their political favor. Recent trips about 'human error' and 'excessive operator fatigue' means that the blame has been shifted off of the aging, replaceable industry, and the frayed cables of the American power-grid shall be allowed to rot away without the costly intervention of union repairmen. In the capital, the formerly-dead Bush Energy Policy, famed for its disregard of the Alaskan tundra, has resurfaced in Congress as the savior of the bemoaned power-grid. With a new rider or two suggesting that electrical deregulation has not yet gone far enough, and that the energy industry is still too hamstrung by environmental and economic restraints, the Policy is back, and widely favored by the incumbent powers. (It is a minor miracle that the issue of drilling for fuel in the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge, which was with us before Mr. Bush ever achieved his office, and was reviled by the nation then, is still being debated. The vastly more popular notion of national health care did not enjoy such a shelf-life when it was being juggled with too-little dexterity by Mrs.

Clinton. In four years, does anybody think ravaging the permafrost has become a better idea?)

The only—only—truth which has emerged from the electrical debacle is that unregulated industry will skimp on the frills in favor of the bottom line, every time. We learned the same lesson from Enron, but the nation was still too freshly emerged from the boom years to truly think ill of Businessmen. And we could even learn the same lesson from the airline industry, deregulated in the 1970s; ask any old coot about a thing called the Jet Age, and he will go into reveries about a time when government oversight was not an albatross, but a guarantee of low prices, top-notch service, and universal access.

It should be the subject of a most grave national referendum when an industry is released from government regulation, because the public ought to decide directly if that industry is integral to the continuity of their citizenship. Is electricity thus? I think so, for its disruption is also a disruption in an American's freedom to work, to pursue happiness, to express himself, and, Luddite or not, to live, in the modern era. To hand these fundamental liberties to private enterprise is as unconstitutional as forcing welfare recipients to listen to Christian sermons in their government-funded soup-kitchens. The Energy Policy that would further release industrialists from any kind of civic responsibility is likewise unconstitutional. Mr. Bush, by seizing on the dilapidation of the American public infrastructure, and essentially blaming the public for it (half a century of public electricity will surely require a few more decades of privatization to remedy, says Double-yoo), has reached new heights of disdain for the peasantry. Anything that has been in the public realm for any amount of time is soiled in the Golden Boy's eyes—library books stink of common hands, the public pools are full of the filth of the people, public schools are decomposing, disgusting hives of dirt and humanity, and the power stations are coated with the oily film of civic concern. Pater Bush thinks it best to annihilate them all, and replace them with the shiniest, newest thing that the tycoons can put together at a fair profit. As long as the businessmen stay honest, it will work out for the good of the teeming American proles. At worst, it will pipe some more wealth upward.

By the 1970s, most of the functions of American society were controlled by an enormous governmental bureaucracy, with varying degrees of efficiency—transportation, communication, health and social services, and all the industries of any import were still tightly reined in by a post-antitrust, post-Roosevelt civic goliath. Yet while the liberals were stripping down and indulging themselves in the mud-pens of the hippie Drop-Out, the capi-

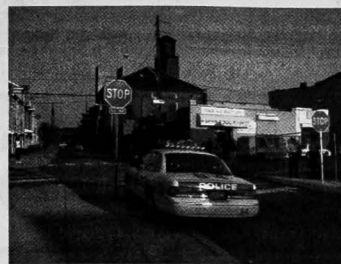
talists were taking control of the political machinery, reviling the thought of even so much socialism in America as was apparent in highway maintenance or mail delivery. And by the 1970s, right under the noses of the negligent, drug-addled Left, Deregulation had become the clarion call of a newly anti-government Government. It was the mid-life crisis of responsible American self-government—pounds must be shed no matter who is sacrificed—and it has not stopped yet.

Cutting costs, 'liberating' industry from oversight, striving for efficiency, and 'encouraging competition' among those already most bloodthirsty, the new conservative powers began the deregulatory movement that continues to this day, and which is largely responsible for the growth of wealth in America in the past three decades. It is deregulation, also, that is responsible for all that wealth's concentration among those who were already well-to-do; for no new virgin market ever opens, but the friends of the landlord are always first in line for the best goods.

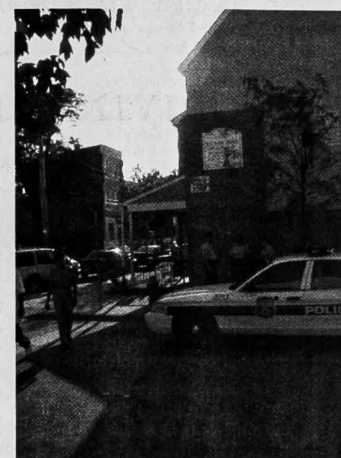
In the early 1990s, after decades of eroding the public's expectations of its government, the Deregulators had made leeway enough to actually cut loose such a socially critical industry as the power companies—to the great delight of the growing conglomerates who were poised to take them over and remake their budgets and their business plans. To be fair, the idea among the conservative idealists was that competition would force modernization, and thus improvement in service—that capitalism was the great democratizer. Competition can indeed improve industry, if and only if it is combined with accountability. But the shills did not answer to the body politic. They still don't; and without government authority threatening their hegemony, they left the ancient equipment in place, and focused on profit, nonchalantly guaranteeing catastrophe, and only hoping that they would live a comfortable long time before their Chapter Eleven closure. Insurance policies with zeroes enough for an astronomer were taken out on nuclear power stations, the money for the premiums a good deal cheaper than paying for technological improvements; the deregulated power industry lives in expectation of its own failure, and has done a good job of making sure that failure won't cost them a penny of their 401(k) retirement plans. For in the world business there is no personal punishment for failure—the executives of bankrupt companies are very hard to distinguish from solvent ones. Not so with government—we know an officeholder when he is standing next to a nobody: he has at once the rosy glow of power, and the glimmering fear in his eye of the people's will. (Oh how he craves the solution to that—the answer to the people's discontent!) But what incentive does a magnate have to perform in the public's interest? We can see how much by the disregard of our magnate-president for the interest of his public. Perhaps the only thing the electricity barons didn't count on was that the failure would come, and their allies would still be in office. Now even their failure will be rewarded—with more liberty and less responsibility—if the Bush Plan goes through.

Alexander Swartwout assisted Henry William Brownjohns with the editing of Three Weeks, a newspaper in Queens, New York.

Inside Operation Safe Streets



Tenth & Brown streets



2100 block, N. 22nd Street



24th & Berks streets



800 block, Diamond Street



2100 block, N. 23rd Street



Ninth & Brown streets



Cumberland & Spangler streets

from POLICE, page 1

"Yeah, by traffic, yeah," said Chris. "Now that it's been going on a while, they're not coming in as much, or if they are, they're going to another location. They're not buying on the corners anymore."

So you might be aware that it's going on, but you don't necessarily act on it? You write a report about it?

"You're more of a deterrent," Chris explained. Drug dealers "never do anything in front of the cops, because they all have look-outs. They'll have little kids on bikes; they have other guys that are on corners. So if they're dealing in the middle of the block, they have a guy on each corner, within yelling distance ... so if you're rolling, they make a siren sound, or they yell '5-0', or they say 'cops', you know, they just make a show of it that you're coming, so that everything for that minute ceases. So even if you park there, it's not a problem. They just walk away—that happens a lot."

"I hate to say it," said Eric, "but it's more of like a smokescreen, if anything, you know. Like, you're out there, and just with your presence, kids can go out in the street and play now—that's true, that's totally true. But it just moves the drug dealers to a different place. We're never gonna stop this completely. It's almost like saying we're gonna stop people in Palestine from bombing people in Israel. It's only a deterrent for the time being, you know. But I feel it does do its job, because there's nothing there now on those corners. Like, there used to be a ton of people, and the only people that are out there now are kids. There's no drug dealers walkin' around."

Where have the drug dealers gone?

"A lot of it has moved indoors," said Chris.

"Before Safe Streets," said Eric, "there were dealers coming into the [Safe Streets] neighborhoods from all over the city. Now they just went back to their neighborhoods, different corners, different areas, in different houses. Drug dealers are like businessmen, you know, they find another life."

You both worked Safe Streets when it started out. What was the community response like?

"That summer," said Chris, "neighbors actually were happy to see us—some. Some people ah, you know, yelled out their window 'good morning.' Some kids were happy to see us. A couple people actually stopped us and said it was good what we were doing—they could leave their house now."

That must have been a good feeling.

"It was, but there was just as many people involved in the game that just hate cops in general."

Eric's memories of the program's early days are not as rosy.

"A lot of people are upset when you lock up drug dealers," Eric explained, "cause someone in their family is probably selling drugs, doing something or other. One time we locked a guy up for selling eighty bags of crack. A girl came up to me and said to me, 'I can't believe you're lockin' him up. You know you're takin' food outta his family's mouth?' I looked at her and said, 'Are you kiddin' me? You just had five shootings the other night, around the corner, and you're gonna say I'm lockin' this guy up for the wrong reason?' I just laughed at her and said 'you're a piece a shit, keep walkin', you

know. What am I supposed to say to that? So in other words, I feel like I'm hindering them from making money, because I'm doing my job."

What were your goals in the beginning?

"It was always suppression through your presence," said Chris. "You weren't out there to make numerous arrests, because if you go and make an arrest, you're off the street for a couple hours. Now nobody's watching that corner, or that area. And you're not supposed to, ah, violate peoples' rights, and all that shit."

One of the most controversial aspects of Operation Safe Streets is its cost. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported in January 2003 that the cost for 2002 alone was expected to reach \$35 million, much of it in overtime pay. Mayor Street has said the program will need \$100 million over five years, the *Inquirer* reported last May. I asked the soon-to-be wedded Eric if he and other officers made a lot of money in overtime.

"Oh, absolutely," he said. "No joke. Your base salary for cops, if you're topped off, is like \$50,000, all right. There's cops making \$95, \$100,000 last year, like, who worked every day. You see a big difference in your checks, and

ities, like shaking down dealers or anything?

"Na, never," said Chris. "And I'll tell you the reason for that: if you were gonna do it, and somebody would know about it, a lot of people would know about it. Say you go into a house, and there's like—in the movies there's three pounds of coke, a couple guns, \$30,000 in cash—if one person's gonna be shady, everybody in the group has to be in, and the odds of getting five or ten people—cause you don't just hit a house with two people like in the movies—it's a whole group. You wouldn't be able to get the whole group, because that would be, you know, ten people who are gonna lose their jobs if one out of the ten snitches or gets picked for somethin' else. So no, I've never really seen anything."

"That's why people hate cops," said Eric. "We chase guys, and we'll be like 'what are you running from?' And they'll be like, 'I'm scared of cops.' You can't use that excuse all the time, but some people are genuinely scared of cops."

"I have arrested guys I'm sure are drug dealers," added Chris. "The most money I've ever found on anybody was \$380, and, just morally I wouldn't do it, but also, even if I had that mindset, I wouldn't take his money and just let 'em roll, just cause, if he rats, or somebody finds out, it's not worth losing your job over \$380. It's not worth it."

So, overall, do you think the program is a success?

"There's less open-air dealing," said Chris. "I think there's less of like, gangs on certain corners, there's less turf wars, I think."

"It's definitely a success," said Eric. "Because it's saving us from things like stupid calls. Like in the summertime, everyone has a white T-shirt and blue jeans. You get a call about a black male, white T-shirt and blue jeans. Oh, OK. You pull up in a car: there's fifty guys on the corner with a white T-shirt and blue jeans. You can't just randomly go up and stop people on a radio call alone. It's not done that way. Now, with Safe Streets, it's like, all right, there's guys right around the corner, workin' that beat, I mean they can pull right up on 'em, you know, as soon as they get the call. These calls aren't pending forever. You don't have to fly over to some disturbance and then have to leave there for something else. You're not like twenty jobs in the hole, or thirty jobs in the hole. If it wasn't for Safe Streets, I don't think they [Safe Streets-area precincts] could physically get through a day."

Do the communities look better?

"Oh yeah," said Eric. "You drive down a street, and some of 'em are clear. You know what I mean? We used to drive down a street and there'd be like, you know, I'm telling you, thirty guys on the corner, dude. Thirty guys. And they'd all be carrying something. It's not like that anymore."

But drugs are still being dealt Safe Streets neighborhoods, just behind closed doors?

"Ah, I'm sure they are," said Chris. "You don't see as many people from other neighborhoods, but it never looks like there's a shortage of crackheads. They're getting it from somewhere."

Bernard Vaughan received his master's degree in journalism from Temple University. He is a frequent contributor to THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT. He can be reached via email at vaughanbernard@hotmail.com.

Smockey & Smockey's Remembered

from SMOCKEY, page 1

younger days, he'd keep the bar open as late as he felt like. Sometimes he'd sit up 'til 3 or 4 pouring drinks for just one guy, sometimes he'd close at midnight and kick everyone out.

Another fondly recalls Smockey's adoration for Sinatra, who smiled down from every angle and in every pose, even on velvet. This wasn't a kitsch thing, one woman points out, Smockey saw him perform over a dozen times. She also remembers his self-discipline. After his father died, the doctor told Smockey to quit drinking and he never had another drop. When he found out he had lung cancer, he never touched tobacco again. And when he lost a little too much money in Atlantic City one year, the man whose second floor was a place for cards and dice and, according to hearsay, other vices, ceased all gambling.

He never rode a plane or a boat, although he had friends in Florida and California. He hated ice hockey and loved baseball. His team, for reasons unknown, was the Cincinnati Reds.

Frank Smockey was a guy who had your back, who would always be there if you were in trouble. Someone who put you at ease. A gentleman who was always respectful to women, although he might have said a few things behind their backs. His bar was a place where you could sit and listen to stories and smoke and watch Clint Eastwood on the TV. An old man bar, not exactly but sort of a dive, where everyone was welcome. Where some-

how, by some magic, even as every shop on Columbia Avenue was sacked in the 1964 race riot, blacks and whites, not to mention drinking cops and drunks, got along. Where no one was favored. If you drank your beer



On the far right, Frank "Smockey" LaMassa Jr. in the bar that bore his name.

nicely, you belonged. If you made trouble, you were shown the door.

The long and narrow room at 947 E. Passyunk may have stood still while the community changed, while Dutch, Swedish, Jewish, Polish, Italian, Lebanese, African American, Central American, and East Asian populations shrank and grew. But Smockey's hospitality didn't just witness the changes in South Philadelphia—it grew along with them, opening the bar's doors ever wider to accommodate the new customers.

We fetishize the neighborhood bar, the local dive, as the last stand, that which stays the same, holding fast to the good old days. But according to his friends, that wasn't Smockey's way. He attracted the young people

who started moving to South Philly not just because they were tourists exploring a new virgin land, but because he was welcoming, because he made all of his customers comfortable. He was, after all, born to a father who took a Polish nickname to attract clientele. Sure, the houses on Kimball were worth more in 2000 than in 1960, but that was about it. There was business, and business was good. This was, after all, a man who was rumored to have bragged that the number of underaged drinkers he'd served could fill Veterans Stadium.

The story goes that Frank looked for a buyer for the bar for several years, but as soon as the deal was signed, he called the sale the biggest mistake of his life. He remained sociable; some say he was lonely, some say he wasn't. He spent time card playing and shit shooting at Uncle Lou's, a smoke shop on Ninth and Ellsworth, or hanging out at John's Barbershop, at Eighth and Catherine, with the man who had cut not only his hair, but also his father's. But, friends agree, there was a sadness. Something that made him who he was, was over.

On the morning of his funeral, the hearse drove him past the bar on the way from St. Paul's Church to the Holy Cross Cemetery. He is survived by one daughter, Roseann, and three nieces. Frank LaMassa was a bartender who lived and died in South Philadelphia, and he will be missed.

Christine Smallwood is about to move to Germany.

METRONAUT

ABSENT & DEPARTED PERSONS

HEAVEN IS IN RUINS

Jeff Elstone Won the Keys to Father Divine's N. Broad Paradise

FILMED "MOTHER DIVINE" INSIDE THE GHOST HOTEL

BY LOREN HUNT

Gary Numan is on the stereo and Jeff P. Elstone II has road rage. It's Sunday, August 17, and the Unity Day crowds swarm the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Unfortunately, we are in a car. It's not scary road rage, with veins bursting from foreheads, death threats, uncalled for nastiness, or high-decibel swearing. It's a toned-down, subtle road rage. When Elstone beats politely on the steering wheel and implores a passerby to hurry up crossing the road, it comes across as sort of wistful and only fair, really, that complete strangers comply with his wishes and cross the street faster so he can get through.

Jeff Elstone's red Acura hatchback is carrying us to Woodmont, a seventy-three-acre estate in Gladwyne, PA. Woodmont is the headquarters of Mother Divine, the second wife of the late Father Major Jealous Divine, Father Divine for short. In the 1930s and 1940s, Father Divine convinced thousands of followers that he was God incarnate. These believers followed a strict code that prohibited sex, profanity, drinking and smoking, and handed over all their personal assets to Father Divine's Divine Peace Mission Movement. When he died, Father Divine's estate was worth millions of dollars and included the Divine Lorraine Hotel, the ten-story ochre cube that towers over the corner of N. Broad Street and Fairmount Avenue. Despite being closed for years to big-budget television and movie productions, the building somehow became the set for 23-year-old Elstone's student film Mother Divine. Now Elstone is taking us to meet Mother Divine herself so he can give her a copy of the film that bears her name.

"Oh, I didn't know PMA was having a sidewalk sale!" quips Duran Brown, dressed in an honest-to-god Catholic schoolboy outfit and glasses with clip-on blue-tinted lenses. He's drinking Boone's Farm Sun Peak Peach flavored malt beverage out of the bottle, languidly posing in the front seat. Elstone cautions him not to get "too loose." Brown assures Elstone in dulcet tones that he will be on best behavior. "That's what I'm afraid of," Elstone mutters. Brown turns to me and rolls his dark eyes, as if to say, "you know how he gets."

As Elstone contends with the herds of Unity Day-ers strolling in front of his car, Brown twists his head around the side of the front seat. "Look, if Mother Divine tries anything funny..." He pulls out a black leather eyeglass case and displays it for me, leaning over the front passenger's seat. "See...it looks like an ordinary eyeglass case, but then..." He opens it with a flourish, revealing a gleaming hunting knife with polar bears engraved on the handle. "I got it at Zerns for five dollars," he chirps, brandishing it with faux-menace at Elstone, who shoves his hand away. "Maybe you should give that to me," Elstone suggests. "In case you try anything funny."

As we pull up in front of Magda Lupeschi's Logan Square high-rise, Brown opens the car door and lights a cigarette. Elstone, the nonsmoker, pretends that he has given Brown permission: "Okay, just this once. And don't let Magda see." Magda apparently flips out if she is exposed to cigarette smoke. Being an opera singer, she cannot tolerate the effects of smoke on her voice. As we wait for Lupeschi, the grand diva of Elstone's film, he and Brown attempt to explain a woman who is

inexplicable: "Magda... is fabulous," Brown proclaims. "She's camp, and she the best part is that she doesn't even know it." "Of course she doesn't know it, that's why it's camp," Elstone says. "Whatever you do, don't ask her how old she is." Lupeschi strides through the doors of the apartment building in alligator kitten heels, a tight mauve skirt, and diaphanous lavender top, she wears tortoiseshell sunglasses and her makeup is perfect.

If art may be said to imitate life, Magda Lupeschi in the flesh is a flawless proof of the converse. Her life is clearly art. Before she is even out the door, Brown opens the car door and kisses her cheek before getting into the back seat, relinquishing the shotgun position in deference to the greater diva. His road rage forgotten, Elstone embraces Lupeschi. Both men coo over her as though she were a rare and priceless souvenir from somewhere they'd always wanted to go. After a few minutes of silence, she suddenly turns to me with the grand struggle of her costuming for the film: "I am, you know, size zero, nothing, you see, so I told her that I would be very difficult to costume, but she did it, the orange dress fit with no alterations and I told her that we had found my gown." She speaks with a regal inclination of her head, as though everyone, not just the reporter, should be taking notes.

Beside the colorful diversions offered by Brown and Lupeschi, Elstone comes off as a subdued enigma. The pair were working as waitstaff in a tapas bar; now they radiate glamour from the lofty, spotlight perches of their lives' true roles. Elstone, the quiet driver, has already scripted their next scene.

FILMOGRAPHY

In twelve minutes, *Mother Divine* illustrates the fundamental tension between human beings and the spaces they occupy, as well as their struggle against solitude within that space. Elstone's film is modeled after a 1930s melodrama, where dramatic situations are pushed to the limits of agonizing emotion. The film's opening juxtaposes the freshness of life outside with the Divine Lorraine Hotel's private decay: clouds career through a powdery blue sky, the sun lights sections of a marble statue in the heart of the building, yet the exterior is sooty, heavy, and somber; the shadows seem to swallow the bright day. In the second scene, shot inside the Divine Lorraine's lobby, ghosts seem to flit around the tiled pillars and dramatic fanned stairwells as we hear the first click of the protagonist's heels against the lobby's marble floor. Marlena, played by Lupeschi, strides inside the hotel with forced self-possession. We see her gathering her mink coat about her as she strains to ignore the building's grime.

During the course of *Mother Divine*, Marlena learns over the telephone that her agent has mysteriously sold her out ("Marlena," he sighs in a German accent, "you are no longer your own. The buyer wants his product."), and her estranged mother is beyond reconciliation ("You have chosen your path, and I have chosen mine. Now you must walk it."). Lupeschi's Marlena clutches the phone cord and scratches at her long black gloves. Despite her mother's cajoling words, the contempt Marlena feels for her own weakness and



Jeff P. Elstone II, and the Divine Lorraine Hotel.

expectancy is all too apparent, even as her resolve is reduced to childish anxiety by her mother's rejection. After hanging up, she gazes alternately at a small framed picture of an unknown woman and her own worn-out face in a huge round mirror, casts her huge bushy eyebrows from one dilapidated mise en scene detail to another, strokes an ermine-trimmed gown she removes from her suitcase, tries out the dead water faucets in a bathroom with peeling paint and a misty mirror, and finds small ways to occupy herself in her new seclusion. The camera watches patiently, as though it does not want to disturb Marlena in the middle of her crisis.

The film ends after Marlena swallows some sort of potent liquid from a vial on her dressing table. Images of Marlena ending in an empty theater—perhaps a memory, perhaps a hallucination—are spliced into a sequence of Marlena lurching down a blue-tinted hallway. Onstage, she meets her end.

The film is Elstone's most ambitious work to date. Most of his earlier films are documentaries, made and produced as part of his coursework at Temple University. Elstone began honing his technique in these early efforts, rife with extended still shots that force his audience into observing with the same uncanny patience as he does.

Boost!, a product indigenous to Elstone's hometown, Riverside, New Jersey, is a thick, greenish citrus-flavored syrup that has gained something of a cult following since its launch in 1913. Boost! is usually mixed with water or seltzer, used as a topping for ice cream, or mixed into smoothies, and is purported to have an assorted range of dubious health benefits. For his first documentary, shot in 2001 as a class assignment, Elstone explores Boost!'s office, located next door to the house he grew up in. Using a handheld camera and keeping his own participation to a few minimal "uh-huhs" and grunts, Elstone focuses with indiscriminate precision on both faces and inanimate details; a single turbine blade, a Dale Earnhardt poster. This first project displays the embryonic beginnings of techniques and ideas that Elstone solidifies in the 2002 documentary, *Staring Is Not Polite*. The premise is simple: Elstone and a small camera crew observe a disk jockey dance held for a group of people with Down's Syndrome. Through Elstone's lens, the audience is given a rare glimpse into a world they are not supposed to stare at. Despite their disabilities, the subjects of Elstone's doc-

umentary behave much like anyone would at a dance: one man in neon-green framed sunglasses shouts the words to every song; a couple canoodles in a corner for a camera they face bravely, unsure of its friendliness. There is an uncomfortably long shot of one teenage boy, with disheveled, dirty-blond hair and a concert T-shirt, who stares back at the camera as though enamored, preening and smiling shyly. Neither the boy nor the camera flinches at this unorthodox intimacy, nor is the audience allowed to. Elstone's emphasis is not on heavy-handed thematics but on patient attention to details: lined up rows of juice-filled cups, the untied laces of a sneaker, the painstaking revelation of each personality developed through a purposefully lingering lens.

We are led through the Shrine to Life, where Father Divine's earthly remains are buried. Another ancient woman with gauzy hair, our guide speaks rapturously of the symbolism on the bronze door leading inside, the sayings of Father Divine carved into marble on the wall of the Shrine, and the small skylight and gold tile adorning the high, sloped ceiling. She smiles vacantly, not meeting anyone's eye, fully absorbed in her own descriptions. "Father and Mother Divine have a spiritual marriage. Mother Divine is as chaste and pure today as she was when she left her mother's womb," the follower announces. By now, I know better than to look at Brown, who is undoubtedly making a face that would send us all into spasms of inappropriate giggles. The follower is oblivious to any and all reactions to her speech. It's as though she's talking to herself. When we leave, she offers us the privilege of touching the place where Father Divine's remains are enshrined. Brown and Lupeschi both lay reverent hands on the marble sarcophagus. Elstone's hands are planted defiantly in his pockets as we exit the temple.

The time has come for us to meet Mother Divine, a living relic from one of the most successful cooperative religious and social associations of the 20th century, and the self-proclaimed bride of God. She wears a dress appropriate for an eighty-something virgin. It is knee-length, patterned with large purple and blue flowers, with a square neck and puffed sleeves. She's wearing knee-highs, which are visible when she crosses her legs. Unlike the followers, her hair looks as though it has received some care and attention, haloing her head in puffy white curls. We all clasp her wrinkled hand in greeting, saying, as she does, "Peace." She looks everyone straight in the eye, with a permanent smile of pleased beatitude. Mother Divine is sitting behind a massive wooden desk. There is an empty chair by her side. She motions to two leather couches and we sit.

On the opposite side of the room sits a man in a gray suit with wiry salt-and-pepper hair. Gray Suit is neither introduced nor does he speak much during the meeting.

As Elstone talks about his film and presses her to speak about her life, Mother Divine seems fully complicit in maintaining the mythos of her spiritual husband. She's not loopy or wavering like the followers, she pauses and appears to consider our questions. At first, it seems that she is issuing solid opinions, yet her answers make no sense. When asked what she thinks about the state of the country

these days, she expresses indignation that the constitution is being so warped and disregarded. She makes sense until she continues that the constitution preached the separation of church and state, which somewhere in her logic means that religion should still be taught in public school. But we all nod, smiling at her reassuringly. She speaks as if she were a monarch or empress, knowing that whatever she says will be respected, or at least listened to with respect, whether she's making sense or not. She's lucid, well-spoken, her imperiousness is understated, implied, hidden behind a kindly old-lady smile and twinkling blue eyes. This makes it impossible to question anything she says, since she is so gracious and so certain that whatever she says will be heard as the words of someone important. In her presence, all of us are hushed, stiff, on our best behavior.

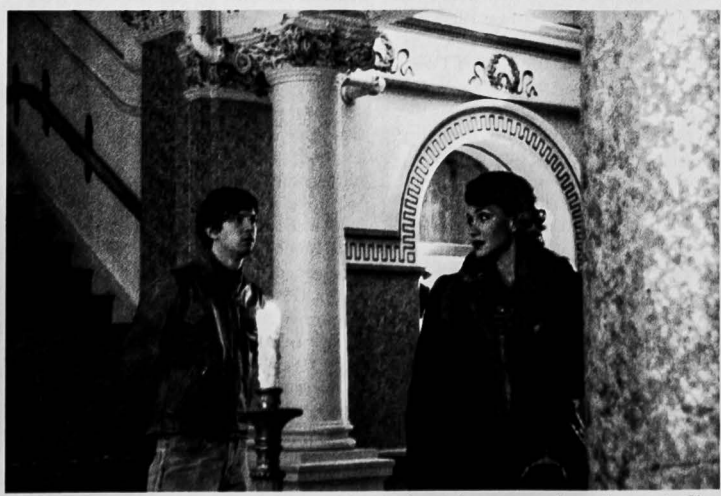
As early as the 1930s, the Divine Peace Mission Movement advocated and acted as an institutional model of racial integration, well before Martin Luther King or Malcolm X brought civil rights into the foreground of the national social consciousness. "We used to have limousines without tinted windows, and we used to sit like a checkerboard in them, sit like a checkerboard at dinner, pair a lighter-skinned man with a darker-skinned man as roommates, as an example of love and integration for the rest of the world to see," Mother Divine recalls as Gray Suit looks on, misty-eyed. "We still do," he adds. It's the first time he's been moved to speak.

This last statement is eerily resonant as she turns to Brown and Elstone, sitting beside each other on the couch, and says, "see? His skin is dark and his skin is light, but you work together, live together, teach each other a love of differences. It pleases me to see that." It's as though she's been the matriarch of the movement, seated in her carved oak chair at Woodmont, swimming her daily laps in the pool, and delegating social work to her followers and volunteers for so long that she has never had the chance to recognize that it is the year 2003, and while civil rights and equality may have a long way to go, they have come far enough that it is hardly noteworthy to see a black man and white man from the world outside the Movement sitting beside each other on a sofa. Elstone and Brown look at each other and smile, realizing that Mother Divine took the racial aspect of their friendship far more seriously than either of them ever had.

Being at Woodmont is a bit like being at a ritzy old-folks home, but there is an added element of entering some sort of forbidden war zone. We are the only people on the grounds under 70 years old, and the only people who are not either followers of the Movement or volunteers affiliated with the Movement. The strangeness of our hosts was amplified by our own strangeness, reflected in their eyes.

A JOB, A CREW, A BRIBE

During his undergraduate years at Temple, Elstone drove past the Divine Lorraine Hotel on North Broad Street almost every day during his commute from his parents' house in New Jersey. "I was in love," Elstone says of the aging Deco palace that was used by the Divine Peace Mission Movement as a hotel from 1948 until its sale to Tony Goldman in 1996. "I knew I



Elstone directs Magda Lupeschi. He borrowed \$5,000 from a former co-worker to finance the film.



Magda Lupeschi on the set of Mother Divine. It took more than 25 people on-site to create the film.

METRONAUT

SPECTRAL INFRASTRUCTURES

wanted to shoot there, but I didn't have a particular project in mind back then. It was more of a pipe dream than anything else." In Elstone's final year at Temple, he heard Peter Leokum of the Philadelphia Film Office lecture and take questions on film locations. Elstone raised his hand and asked about the Divine Lorraine. Leokum said that was impossible; that no one ever gets inside the Divine Lorraine; that many have tried, including major television productions such as *Hack*, and been turned away despite offering large sums of money.

At that time Elstone was working at the Italian Bistro, where he met Magda Lupeschi, a fellow server and aspiring opera singer. With her natural equivoque and grandiose manner, she was an obvious choice the role of Elstone's star and muse. Lupeschi soon followed him to the newly-opened and short-lived Trust, where the clientele was swank and the tips were more suitable to her starlet-moonlight-as-server sensibilities.

In February 2002, during Elstone's final semester at Temple, he began to consider what he should do for his senior project. Many of the other students had shot their footage in the fall, leaving plenty of time for editing and production. All Elstone had were the sketchy beginnings of a script about a woman in a hotel all by herself, five or six people slated to help out on the crew, and Lupeschi, the star. When Elstone discovered that Goldman Properties, the same company that owned Trust, also owned the Divine Lorraine, he switched into overdrive. "I just turned on the switch and started pursuing it like a wild dog ... using all my cunning to slither in one way or another." He began working furiously on the script that would later become *Mother Divine*, driven by the idea that the coveted shooting location would be his.

Elstone contacted the Philadelphia Film Office, who connected him to several professionals willing to work on student productions, and put the word out about his project around Temple. Soon, he had assembled a crew of more than twenty-five people, all before even daring to ask permission to shoot in the hotel. This coup would require the help of Duran Brown, then a server at Trust who was notoriously a favorite of the management. "Lunch shift started around 10 A.M., but the restaurant didn't open until 11:30, so we had a lot of time to kill with nothing to do," Elstone says of his early relationship with Brown. "I liked being one of the only people who caught on to [Brown's] act, which is a huge joke. We just sort of gravitated towards each other." Brown for his part, says that Elstone, "reminds me of Tim Burton. Very dark, artistic, the kind of person I like to surround myself with." By the time Elstone began pursuing the Divine Lorraine location in earnest, Brown had been promoted to the cushy office job of Sales and Promotions Manager at Trust.

Instead of marching into Tony Goldman's office and asking for the keys, Elstone relied on Brown's clout with the upper echelons of Goldman Properties to feel out the situation. Brown's first step was to casually ask around the office. He posed polite inquiries to several Goldman higher-ups, all of whom repeated what Peter Leokum had already told Elstone: that it was highly unlikely that Charles Carroll, the Divine Lorraine's property manager, would give anyone permission to use the building. A poorly planned music video shoot was rumored to have damaged the building's circuit board several years ago. Brown was told that Carroll now denied access to everyone, whether they were a film student or a major production company. Upon hearing this, Elstone suggested that perhaps Brown merely needed to work harder. "No was not the right answer; not the answer I needed to make this film happen. So I just refused to accept it," said Elstone of this initial round of rejections. "I would call [Duran Brown] on his cell phone and get these little debriefings during the intermission between when it looked like things might happen and things actually began happening. He was John the Baptist, in a sense."

Elstone decided that the only way to convince Carroll to do him a favor was to get personally involved. After asking around at work, Elstone learned that Carroll was a sucker for white chocolate, premium white chocolate, not the kind you find in drugstores. Just before his lunch shift, Elstone handed Brown fifty dollars and instructions to track down Philadelphia's best box of white chocolates.

While Elstone scraped crumbs off tablecloths and filled water glasses, Brown was bribing the concierge at the Ritz Carlton with free dinner passes to Trust. "They thought the candy shop was closed," he says. "I had to tell them I was Tony Goldman's secretary and I absolutely needed white chocolates that very second. Can you believe there was such a production over white chocolates?" The concierge also procured the enormous bouquet of white roses that Brown delivered to Carroll along with the white chocolates. "I think he was a lit-



"You are no longer your own. The buyer wants his product."

tle embarrassed to be getting candy and flowers from a boy," Brown confides. "But secretly, he loved it."

This maneuver is classic Elstone. It's basically shameless ass-kissing pulled off in a style that makes Elstone look classy, thoughtful, and generous as opposed to pathetic. First of all, he did his research regarding the appropriate offering to lay at Carroll's all-powerful feet. Also, by using Brown, a middleman comfortable with tasks such as delivering flowers and candy, both Elstone and Carroll were spared the embarrassment of having to look each other in the eye during such a display of shameless ass-kissing. Furthermore, this tactic utilized one of Elstone's slipperiest and most effective skills: acknowledging the importance of others, flattering them until they feel like being helpful in a way that benefits Elstone. Although Carroll did not return several calls seeking comment for this article, Brown and Elstone both have their opinions about why Carroll eventually let the project go through. "It was no whim of [Carroll's]," confides Brown. "He's very intelligent, you can't get much by him. In

and say I couldn't use it."

Elstone's faith in his project was unwavering, despite the grueling process that took place before he actually had keys to the building in his hand. He bought insurance. He rented generators. He met all of Carroll's requirements one by one, even when other aspects of the project went awry. An associate from one of Elstone's former restaurant jobs who had promised to finance the production backed out at the last minute, forcing Elstone to take out a \$5,000 loan from a former co-worker. With graduation only a few months away, he was one of the few Temple film students who hadn't shot their senior project yet. He threw himself a fundraiser party at Trust with the help of Brown, a hired contortionist from New York, and a cryptic flyer that read, "Who is Jeff Elstone?" while the question of whether the film would happen was still not settled. He continued tailoring the script with the assumption that it would be shot at the Divine Lorraine. He had already backed himself into a corner before Carroll delivered his final, and most stringent requirement for use of the

opts to sit with us for dinner. Even so, when the doddering waitress arrives to take our drink orders, Brown cannot resist asking the frail, white-haired volunteer if she has any Stoli. She smiles and shakes her head in a way that suggests she has no idea what he's talking about. Elstone shoots him a look. "We're all trying to keep straight faces, but: 'Whatever you do, don't drink the Kool-Aid,'" whispers Elstone. There is a lot of coughing going on to disguise the snickers in front of Gray Suit.

Kool-Aid is not offered. Instead, the waitress offers us the sinister-sounding "Raspberry Drink." We demur, except for Brown, who later described the beverage as, "thick. It looked like it was going to be carbonated, but it wasn't. Tasted sort of like cough syrup." Next up is carrot-ginger soup, which is served cold in teacups. Elstone tries his first, as we all watch with wide eyes. Nothing happens after the first spoonful. "Wow, this is really good!" he says, smiling wanly and reaching for the salt and pepper. Gray Suit agrees heartily, lapping it up. We are all hard-pressed to finish it. It's not unappetizing; just really, really orange. After a visit to the excellent salad bar, entrees are served. Brown and Elstone have ordered the safe-seeming turkey wraps, and give them rave reviews. "I think there's cilantro in this!" Brown enthuses. Lupeschi picks daintily at her salmon mousse. She proclaims it to be "very light." It is impossible to tell whether she means this as praise or criticism.

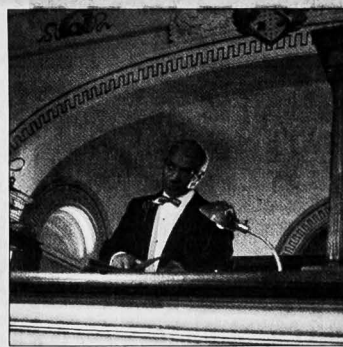
At the end of the meal, a plastic check tray is passed around with a card that states Father Divine's philosophy on donations. Apparently, donations for spiritual enlightenment are not accepted, although donations for material goods such as lodgings, services, or food (printed in emphatic boldface) are welcomed. We are sitting right behind the woman accepting "donations" at a cash register, privy to witness at least several of the followers donate what seem like astronomical amounts of cash: mostly twenties, two twenties here and there, one ostentatiously proffered fifty. One oblivious guest hands the register volunteer a dollar, and is rewarded with a look that could make a sewage runoff ditch seem like a pleasant swimming hole. We are having a hard time leaving. Gray Suit uses the sated, post-dinner lull to regale us with the supernatural foibles of Father Divine.

It's not that Gray Suit isn't interesting. No one else thought to tell us that the Big F.D. was barely five feet tall, although once when he lent his suit to a man who was over six feet tall, the suit fit perfectly. Every time the tall man put his hands in the pockets of Father Divine's suit, he found them full of money. Father Divine survived all thirty-two lynchings he received during the course of his life, including one encounter with a point-blank bullet to the head. As Gray Suit gets further and further away from events that could have happened in a reality the four of us are more or less familiar with, our interest wanes and our politeness grows threadbare. Furthermore, he follows us out to the car and continues to talk as we stand in the parking lot, shooting each other pointed looks. "He was lynched thirty-two times," Brown repeats, voice nastily saccharine. "And how exactly did that work out for him?" Elstone grits his teeth as Gray Suit proselytizes about Father Divine's second-coming status. Lupeschi is still nodding, feigning poised attentiveness. We have been at Woodmont for almost five hours.

After Gray Suit finally heads back up the hill towards Woodmont, we are stunned silent for the first few minutes of the car ride back into the city. Brown speaks first, bringing up the fact that Mother Divine sat beside an empty chair next to Father Divine's old study chair. This reminds us that during the meeting with Mother Divine, Elstone asked a pointed question regarding the movement's preparation for Father Divine's bodily death. She told us that they had been most unprepared; that the Shrine of Life had not been completed until almost two years later. Elstone speculates that possibly they had tried to pretend he was still alive; corpse sitting at the head of the table as usual. "Like *Weekend at Bernie's*!" he exclaims, too drained to censor his speech. Lupeschi lets out a series of bloodcurdling shrieks; this is her version of hysterical laughter. "*Weekend at Bernie's*!" she hoots. "With the flies, and the, you know, little strings!" Soon, we're all laughing at the fact that she is laughing so hard.

"This has been so much fun," Brown says to Elstone while the rest of us giggle at the relief of being away from the cloying confines of Woodmont, in a car with people our own age, and the dubious comfort of the same Gary Numan album still blasting from the stereo. Lupeschi agrees that she also had a nice day. We all look at Elstone, but his eyes are focused on the road and it's impossible to tell what he's thinking.

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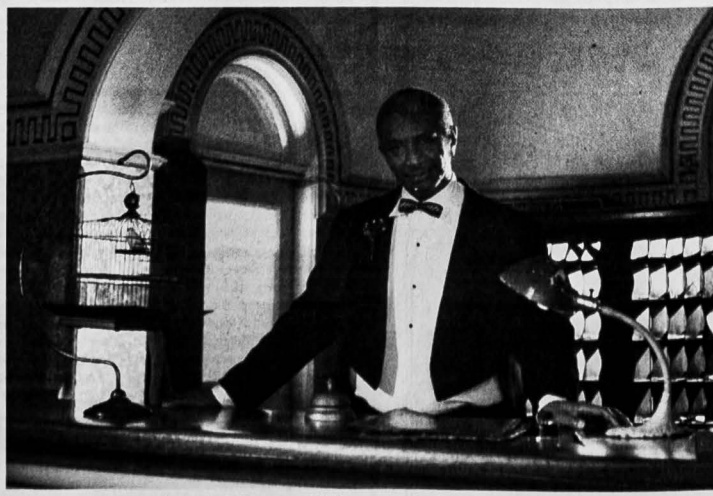
the end I think [Carroll] said yes because he wanted to be part of something grand, like all of us. And he was," Elstone shrugs. "I don't think about why he let me in. I'm just really glad he did, and I hope he's glad he did it."

White chocolates only cracked the door open so far. Elstone's struggles with procuring the building were only beginning. "I don't know if they were aware of how prepared I was to do this ... they thought I was just a humble little film student—meanwhile, I had a whole army waiting in the wings,"—the twenty-five person crew. "When he found out how many people were involved, I think he got a little apprehensive about the project. Initially, Carroll gave a sort of neutral not-a-no ... but then he had a list of demands that I had to meet; he wanted to be sure I was providing for my crew. He was definitely looking out for my crew, making sure I wasn't in over my head ... waiver forms everyone had to sign upon entering the building, insurance, plumbing, generators because the electricity in the hotel was so screwed up. He kept coming up with new things that I hadn't thought of. And I wouldn't have it done, of course, so he'd change his mind

Divine Lorraine: the entire shoot had to be accomplished in three days. The fact that Elstone pulled this all off left him thinking that not only was he shooting at a divine location, but with the help of some sort of divine intervention. "Without exaggeration, this film almost did not happen," said Elstone. "This leads me to believe that this project was meant to be, as cliché as that might sound."

THE WIFE OF GOD

When Gray Suit ushers us towards the visitor's center after our audience with Mother Divine, we are hungry, exhausted, and dying for an opportunity to drop the polite-and-concerned-young-folk routine. The visitor's center is a bright and modern dining hall, with a wall of windows, a lofty ceiling crisscrossed with blond wood beams, and matching green-and-yellow table and chair sets. The patterned paper napkins are elaborately folded and appear to be hand painted. It's packed full of followers, dressed in their white Sunday bests and looking a whole lot like extras from *Cocoon*. Instead of joining his peers, Gray Suit



J. Emerson McGowan as the Concierge.

FATHER M. J. DIVINE

An Introduction to his Life & Movement

BY RICHARD CHARLES



PEACE!

I HAVE MADE
PHILADELPHIA
THE
INTERNATIONAL
COUNTRY SEAT
OF THE WORLD

Where I AM Gathering All Nations, Languages,

Tongues and Peoples of the Earth Together!

— FATHER DIVINE

Dec. 4, 1949 A.D.F.D.

Father Divine and quote from *The New Day*, the Divine Peace Mission Movement's newspaper.

The face of God. While many charismatic leaders have claimed special access to God, few have claimed to actually be the deity. Followers of the Divine Peace Mission Movement, however, recognize Father Major Jealous Divine as the creator. Known as "angels," his followers adhere to a strict code of modesty that forbids smoking, drinking, vulgarity, obscenity, profanity, and "undue mixing of the sexes." Today, hundreds of followers still recognize Father Divine as God, despite the issuance of God's death certificate in 1965. Since that time, Mother Divine, who as Edna Rose Ritchings married God in 1946 when she was just 21, has presided over the movement from her Woodmont estate in Gladwyne.

Divine's message was a mixture of Methodism, Catholicism, American jingoism, popular Harlem storefront revivalism, and New Thought, a popular early 20th century religious ideology that held that one's thoughts literally had the power to create one's material reality. As the embodiment of the Holy Trinity, Father Divine's physical form completed the New Testament's prophecy of a heaven on earth. His message of racial harmony predated the civil rights movement by nearly forty years, and through his social outreach he was able to attract tens of thousands of supporters worldwide and raise enough money to buy real estate and start businesses all over the country (though no properties were listed in his name, rather in the

International Modest Code
Established by Father Divine

No Smoking • No Drinking • No Obscenity
No Vulgarity • No Profanity
No Undue Mixing of Sexes
No Receiving of Gifts, Presents,
Tips or Bribes

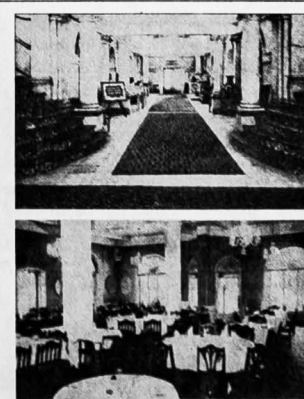


Quote from *The New Day*, and *Mother Divine*, who now leads the Movement.

names of corporations and individuals associated with the movement). The movement reached the height of its popularity during the Great Depression, as Father Divine's message of racial harmony, spiritual fulfillment, and especially his assistance in achieving economic independence attracted scores of people to his home, or "Heaven," in Sayville, New York. Each Sunday, cars and buses lined the streets awaiting Father Divine's lavish free banquets. Neighbors and police soon tired of the weekly galas, and in 1931 Father Divine found himself on trial for disturbing the peace. The jury found him guilty and the judge, who had seemed poised to punish Father Divine since the trial's opening, handed down the maximum sentence: a \$500 fine and one year in prison. Just days after sentencing, the 55-year-old judge died of a heart attack. When a reporter asked Father Divine about his feelings on the matter, Divine replied from his jail cell, "I hated to do it," a quote which launched him from a semi-obscure regional zealot to national religious figure with followers around the globe. After the original conviction was reversed on appeal, Divine was released from jail amid reams of publicity. He kept the Sayville house but moved his base to Harlem, where a frenzied, hysterical crowd of disciples welcomed God to his new home. The Movement continued successfully in Harlem, and moved its base to Philadelphia in 1941 either at the insistence of a local minister, or, some say, to avoid one-time followers who had been demanding that Divine return their money. In Philadelphia, the movement continued and started up dozens of cash-only businesses including laundry services and discount hotels, such as the Divine Tracy in Powelton Village and the Divine Lorraine on North Broad Street.



Images of the Lorraine Hotel before its sale to the Movement, circa 1930.



The Divine Lorraine, designed by architect Willis G. Hale in the late Victorian style, has remained the most architecturally noteworthy structure in the area just north of City Hall since its completion in 1893. The building belonged to the Divine Peace Mission Movement from 1948 until 2000, when it was purchased by Goldman Properties for \$1.7 million. Goldman is presently negotiating the sale of the building to another developer. Though some of the building is in a state of disrepair, much is as elegant as it was during Father Divine's lifetime. There are plush couches, woven dining seats, large ceramic tables and even a grand piano locked up behind the hotel's massive double doors. Based in part on Father Divine's use of the structure, the Divine Lorraine Hotel was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

METRONAUT

CURVED SMOKE IN THE STRAIGHT GRID

Letter from Baracoa



from Action Comics #1

from CUBA, page 1

particularly of such a clashing shade.

Somewhat Richard sees through my flawless accent and demands to know my country of origin. I tell him I am an American. There is an oft-repeated legend in the travel literature that Americans ought not refer to themselves as 'Americans' when in Cuba, because the Cubans have long argued that *they* too are Americans, and so everyone from Mr. Hemingway on down has made a big show of calling themselves 'norteamericanos.' (This has always struck me as both falsely humble, and a cop-out from the responsibility of every union Yankee abroad, to take the abuse coming to him, and answer it.) Well, I am here to report

that the Cubans are over it; for two weeks I consciously identified myself as 'norteamericano,' and every time, my interlocutor replied with an enthusiastic "Canada? America? Que parte?" Now I reply 'Estados Unidos,' as I am ever pursuing the happiness of everyone at once, and I despise vagaries.

Upon discovering an American in his midst, Richard has the same response that scores of other Cubans have—he smiles with deep approval, and pounds his fists together as if he were testing out an invisible baseball bat, and says "ah, America. Very good." In the circumstances, I am uninterested in trying to modify this opinion; in fact, I am every day more persuaded of its general appropriateness,

the more I see of the failures of the alternative. If this seems a harsh statement about the Cuban system, I would be tragically impolitic to insist on the admirable traits of it, after I have heard nothing but the most heartfelt condemnations, from those people who have spent their entire lives waiting for it to begin working. The open-minded American traveler—or the jaded one—will likely be disappointed to see that the glorious new society of Castro and Che is really a pale comparison to the trouble-some but nevertheless vital civilization at work in the United States. The Cubans feel a profound camaraderie with their Northern neighbors. Even through the thickest of the political antagonisms, there has been a belief that we two share a national character, that we are somehow the same people, realizing different fates. Indeed, Cuba does not feel like a foreign country at all; but it feels exactly like the United States in an alternate future, a sort of looking-glass America. (The old Cuban Capitol building, in Havana, is indeed a miniature replica of the Washington Capitol, but with eerie and sinister black and gold highlights.)

Richard's sales pitch doesn't have much force to it, and as soon as I am American, he wants to talk of other things—primarily, of his fondness for Michael Jackson, our national chanteuse of the ambiguous psychology. Richard's perception of Mr. Jackson is hardly so cynical; he knows of the singer only through a single source, a videotape left behind by an ancient and forgotten tourist, which included a concert performance of "Billie Jean," among a compilation of obviously inferior Cuban pop videos. Thus, Richard's dedication to Mr. Jackson is based on a repertoire of only one song. He has memorized every word of it—at least the sounds of them—and he sings them flawlessly for me, without so much as my asking. But as he doesn't speak any English, he does not know what the sounds mean. Perhaps I can tell him what this song, the finest song since Mozart wowed the Archduke, what, oh what, this song means. I am only fourteen days into my informal education in Spanish. This conversation would prove to be a turning point for me.

I begin by making sure the title is understood—Billie Jean, *est el nombre de mi mujer.*

Billie Jean is the name of a woman. Richard knew this much. (I shall transcribe my utterances in the true horrendousness of their actuality, and not pretend to have been articulate. The magic of the incident was that we two were able to communicate anything at all, and I want my readers to appreciate the obstacles we faced. Those readers fluent in Latin-American Spanish, and especially its Cuban mutation, are requested to leave the copy-editors of this newspaper alone, as they have been instructed to leave this section untainted by correctness.)

Now I plunged into my memory for the lyrics of that tune, and found them surprisingly close to the surface. I fumbled around in my limited Latin vocabulary.

"Billie Jean, ella no est mi novia. Ella solo es una niña, y ella dice yo es el uno, ella dice el bambino es mio. Pero el bambino no es mio." 'Billie Jean is not my girlfriend. She is only a girl, and she says I am the one. But the baby isn't mine.' I am proud to consider this the moment of enlightenment in my bilingual education—where my tired mind suddenly found a new gear in which to operate, and, rightly or wrongly, words which meant nothing to me poured forth from my lips.

After a few minutes of clarification, Richard seemed to understand the gist of my explanation, and he approved of the roguish machismo Mr. Jackson was expressing in his lyrics. At no point could I muster the courage or the diction to begin to describe the course of Mr. Jackson's subsequent career. But I did offer an opinion on "Thriller," that record album upon which "Billie Jean" was featured. Richard had no idea about this; here is the strange shape American popular culture has found itself in the minds of the awakening Cuban youth, like shards of information from a civilization on the Moon.

I described an entire disk, full with songs of appeal equal to "Billie Jean," and Richard's excitement grew. Then I described other, similar records, many of which are also well-fitted out with efforts of Mr. Jackson's, comparable to his best. Richard approved, and affirmed "Mr. of pop," *el Rey de Pop*. The lines of communication were tenuous from myself and the

Cuban school-lad, but I ventured an irresistible question, and one I thought not too much of a stretch from the subject: "Sabes usted *Prince*, tambien?"

Prince?

"First, I thought I must define the word. 'Una prince' es el niño del rey."

'Prince' is the son of Michael Jackson, the King of Pop? This turns out to be obliquely true, but readers well-enough versed in the popular music of the penultimate decade will know it is not my desired point. I deny this, to keep things as simple as possible. I offer a few verses, off key, of "Little Red Corvette." There is no response. Ten frustrating minutes later, Richard knows only that there is, or was, a singing prince somewhere in Michael Jackson's castle, and that he is quite possibly Mr. Jackson's own child, though the identity of the mother is a mystery. In retrospect, I am content to have conveyed across lines linguistic, cultural, and political, at least a little of the confusion necessary to really appreciate Mr. Jackson's oeuvre. I collected Richard's mailing address, and am obliged to mail him a videotape with a better selection of Mr. Jackson's work, when I am returned home. Its likelihood of ever getting to him, unfortunately, is extraordinarily slim, due to the doubled vigilance of American officials who don't want the Cubans to enjoy what we enjoy until they play by our economic rules, and by Cuban bureaucrats, who are unashamed about taking for themselves anything in the mail that looks like it might fetch a couple of dollars on the black market.

With the rain threatening again over the jungle-green slopes, I take my leave of Richard and the sea, but not before he shows me what he has been practicing. He begins to glide backwards on his feet, bending the arches alternately, until he stops, spins, and shrieks. Outside every reasonable context, I realize what a morass of nonsense we live in at home, thinking ourselves perfectly sane. I tell him what he has just done: "El camino de la luna." He bids me good afternoon, and we part. The discovery of the New World, which occurred on this very shore, is the furthest thing from my thoughts.

Henry William Brownejohns is Assistant Editor at THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT.

Grimy August

from AUGUST, page 1

functioning. Many businesses close for the day, leaving me unable to complete necessary errands. Cranky people in cars yell and shake their fists at each other, arguing over right-of-way. Pedestrians wander around with slumped shoulders and watchful eyes, unsure of what to do with themselves. One minute, the wind picks up, clouds gather, and thunderstorms seem inevitable; the next brings a hazy, warring sun. Misanthropic tension prevails, straining to avoid the sudden shift towards hysteria. It is too hot for suicides. It is also too hot for the power to go out. All day, I try not to think about what nightmare will bring.

At the R.U.B.A. one night, I get involved in a conversation with a sixty-something guy who tells me, in disjointed spurts, about how he has killed six men, married a whore, and is nuts. He buys me a beer. "You're sick of talking to all the horny young jerks, aren't you?" he asks. I nod. "I tell better stories, right?" I nod again. "I'm the psychologist of these people. I'm the only one who knows how crazy everyone is." My head moves woodenly up and down. The man darts off suddenly into the night, doing a little jig, like Rumpelstiltskin or some sort of demented elf. I look around for someone else to talk to.

Loren Hunt is Fiction Editor at THE INDEPENDENT.



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The United States
in Latin America
A Conference in memory of Salvador Allende

THE CONFERENCE, ENTITLED "TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY," COMBINES ECONOMIC AND
POLITICAL ANALYSIS, WRITERS AND POETS FROM LATIN AMERICA AND THE UNITED STATES.

Sunday, September 7, 2 P.M.—Film & Discussion on
Globalization and the WTO: Global Village or Global
Pillage? How People Around the World Are Challenging
Corporate Globalization. By Jeremy Brecher and Tim
Costello. This is What Democracy Looks Like. A co-production
of the Seattle Independent Media Center and Big Noise
Films, this is a 70 minute documentary capturing the events
of the 1999 anti-WTO protests in Seattle.

Monday, September 8, 7 P.M.—Film & Discussion on
NAFTA and Latin America: Mickey Mouse Goes to Haiti:
describes labor conditions in Haitian factories where clothing
with the Disney label is sewn. Zoned for Slavery: the
Child Behind the Label tells of a campaign to defend the
rights of young women who work for sweatshops in El
Salvador.

Tuesday, September 9, 7 P.M.—Film & Discussion on
Colombia: Bitter Taste of Coca Cola. More than 10,000
Colombian soldiers have been trained in the U.S. at the School
of the Americas. Discussion lead by Philadelphia activist Berta
Joubert-Ceci, International Action Center, who has been working
with the striking Coca Cola workers in Colombia.

Wednesday, September 10, 7 P.M.—Film & Discussion on
Chile—Class of '55 Conference Room, 2nd floor, Van Pelt-
Dietrich Library, 34th & Walnut Streets.

Thursday, September 11, 7 P.M.—Film & Discussion on
Venezuela/Venezuela—A 21st Century Revolution.
Discussion lead by Phoebe Jones Schellenberg of Global
Women's Strike.

Friday, September 12, 7 P.M.—Discussion, El Futuro de
Las Americas Latina—At Taller Puertorriqueno, Education
Building, 2557-59 North 5th St., 215-426-3311. With
Marjorie Agosin, Chile; Arturo Anas, Guatemala; Gianpaolo
Baocchi, Brazil; Jan Carew, Guyana; Berta Joubert-Ceci,
Puerto Rico; Enrique Sacerio-Gari, Cuba.

Saturday September 13, 7 P.M.—Conference, To Promote
Democracy: The United States in Latin America. First
Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, 1215 Chestnut Street.
10 A.M.—Welcome & Introduction by Craig Eisendrath,
former Foreign Service Officer with the Department of
State, and senior fellow with the Center for International
Policy in Washington, D.C.

10:30 A.M.—Overview of economic intervention pre-
sented by Prof. Patrick Bond of the University of the
Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. The role of
U.S. corporations in Latin America; U.S. tariff and banking
policies, embargo & economic sanctions; the role of the
International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World
Trade Organization, NAFTA and free trade for manufac-
tured goods.

11:30 A.M.—Overview of military intervention and covert
action presented by Adam B. Isacson. Covert action and the
role of the CIA; direct intervention with U.S. troops, the
School of the Americas and the training of Latin American
military and death squads; and the role of American military
aid missions abroad. Adam B. Isacson is a senior analyst
for the Center for International Policy in Washington, D.C.
and served as a program officer for the Center for Peace
and Reconciliation of the Anas Foundation for Peace and
Human Progress.

1:00 P.M.—Panel Discussion on the Caribbean and
Central America, moderated by Arturo Anas. Jan Carew,
Adam Isacson, Paul LeBlanc, Enrique Sacerio-Gari, and
Ambassador Robert White will be panelists. The panel will
use their expertise to apply the morning's discussion of eco-
nomic and military intervention to specific cases in the
Caribbean and Central America. Arturo Anas is Director of
Latin American Studies at the University of Redlands. Paul
LeBlanc is associate professor of history and chair of the
Humanities Division of La Roche College. Enrique Sacerio-
Gari was born in Cuba and now lives in Pennsylvania. He is
a literary critic, translator and poet. Robert E. White is for-
mer U.S. ambassador to Paraguay and El Salvador, resigning
this latter post because of serious disagreements with the
Reagan administration.

3:00 P.M.—Panel Discussion on South America, will be
moderated Marjorie Agosin. Dennis Brutus, Adam Isacson,
Berta Joubert-Ceci, and Paul LeBlanc will be panelists.
Marjorie Agosin has authored 20 books of fiction, non-fiction,
poetry and essays and is a recipient of the 1999 United
Nations Leadership Award for Human Rights. Dennis
Brutus is known as the "singing voice of the South African
Liberation Movement." Political campaigns led to his being
banned from all political and social activity.

7:30 P.M.—The World Social Forum. The World Social
Forum has taken place in Porto Alegre Brazil for the last
three years. Developed as a counterpoint to the World
Economic Forum, over 51,000 people from 52 countries
gathered to discuss how to make the world a better place,
with the motto: Another World is Possible. We have both
films of the activities and people who have attended.
Discussion will be led by Dennis Brutus and Paul Lelanc.

Sunday September 14, 10 A.M.—Art & the Activist panel
discussion: How do you change the world? How do you use
your art to do it? How do you stay alive while you do this?
What is the relation of art to revolution? Many of yesterday's
panels join us to discuss this convoluted question, and then
to display their art after lunch.

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TEAM UP LIKE CRICKETS

THE SOUND OF LOS ANGELES

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD BOEBEL

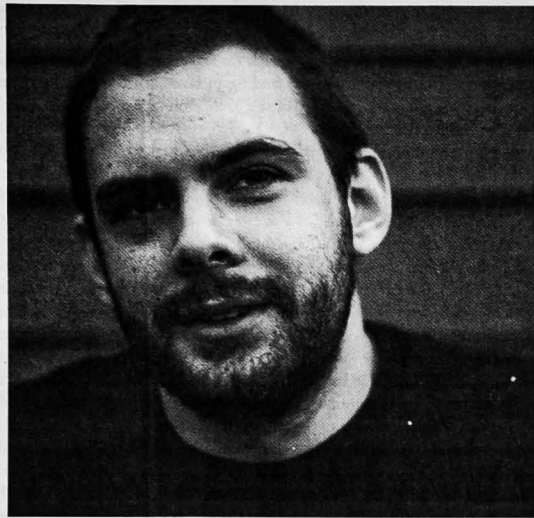
Modern black music and the city of Los Angeles didn't get off to the best start. This was, after all, the same Los Angeles that gave Bird and Diz's groundbreaking bebop combos some of their coldest receptions, eventually leading to Parker's breakdown and institutionalization. In the 1950s and early 1960s, L.A. gave rise to seminal figures like Charles Mingus, Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy, who fled to New York as soon as they could; inspired voices like Frank Morgan and Sonny Criss stayed around, but were overshadowed by the glut of studio musicians and cool jazz practitioners who dominated the scene. Then things

started to go right: a generation of young, politically inclined vanguardists, including pianist Horace Tapscott and clarinetist John Carter, made the all-important connection between progressive art and the city's strong sense of community. This equation would only be fully realized in the late 1980s, when a group of emcees, loosely organized around a series of open mic nights at the Good Life Cafe, combined neighborhood blues with jazz-like angularity and abstraction.

In present day Los Angeles, artists continue to make appearances on all their friends' albums and musicians continue to experiment unencumbered by record label

pressure or commitment. Many have simply started their own labels in the absence of broader mainstream interest. In the 1950s, Pacific Jazz, Contemporary, Fantasy, and Debut (owned and operated by Charles Mingus) were the labels documenting Los Angeles. Today it's Stones Throw, Ubiquity, and Celestial, a label run by producer and deejay Daddy Kev.

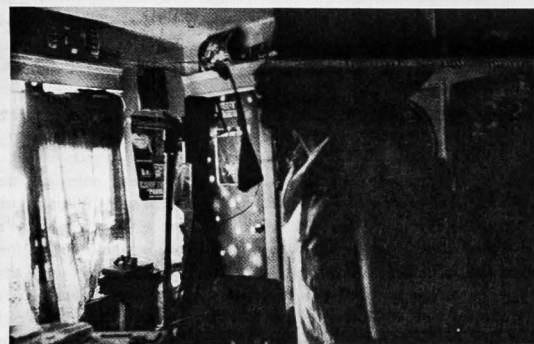
The Out of Print Project, a collection of interviews and photographs by Todd Boebel, Jamie Bogner, Kyle Eagle and Sebastian Jaramillo seeks to document these artists at live shows and extended interview sessions. Here is a selection of their images.



Paris



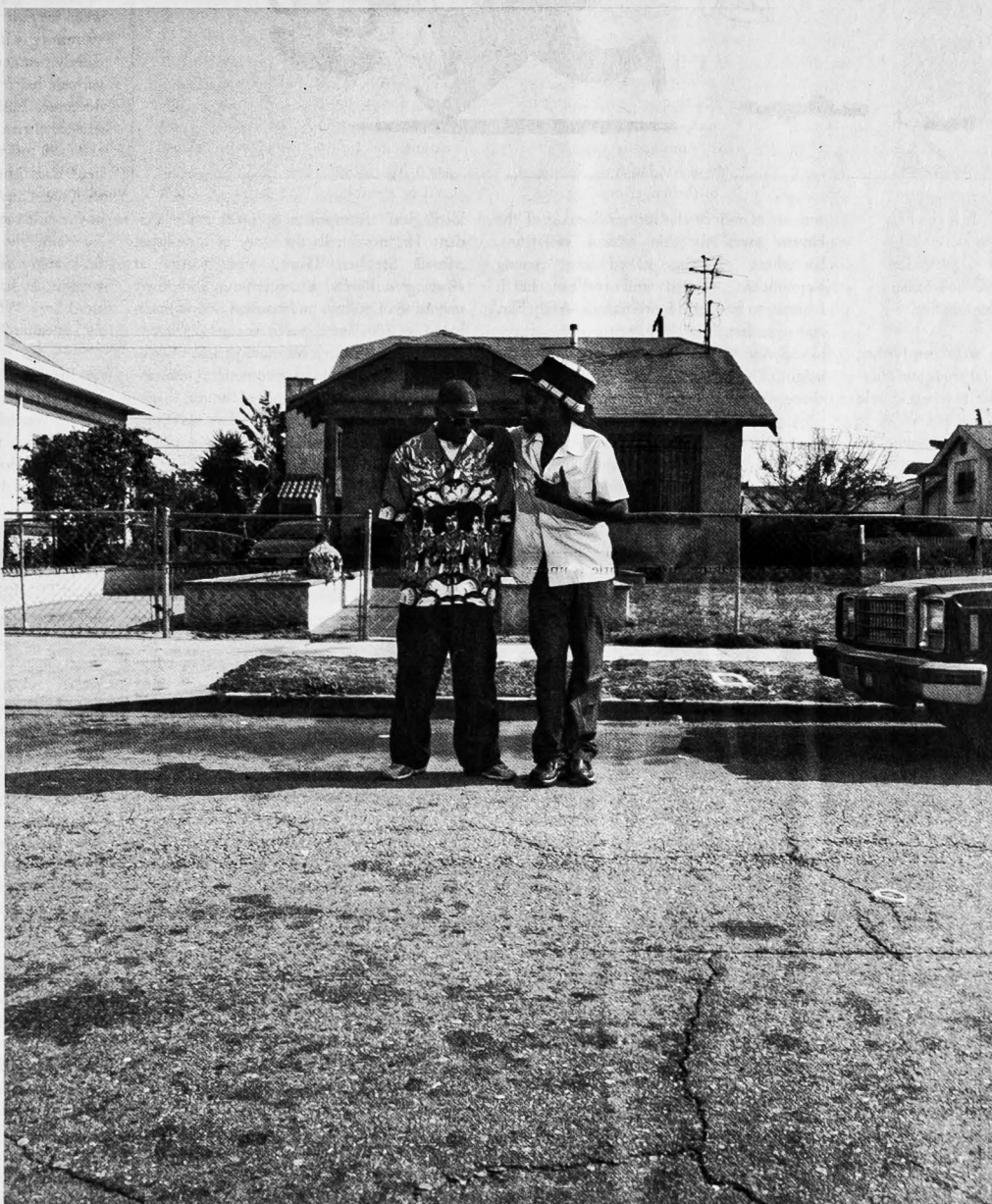
Abstract Rude



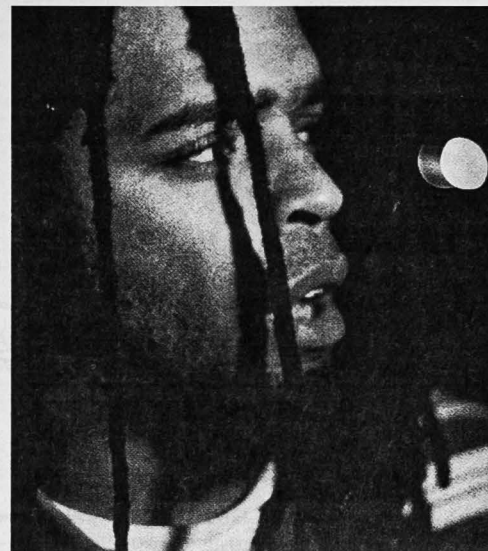
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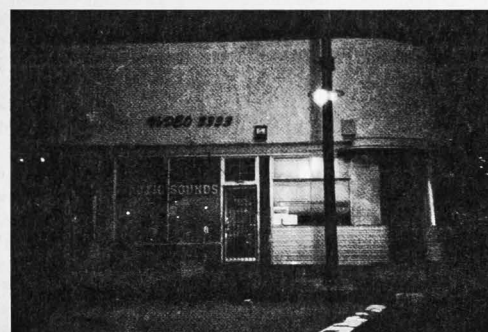
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Peace & Abstract Rude



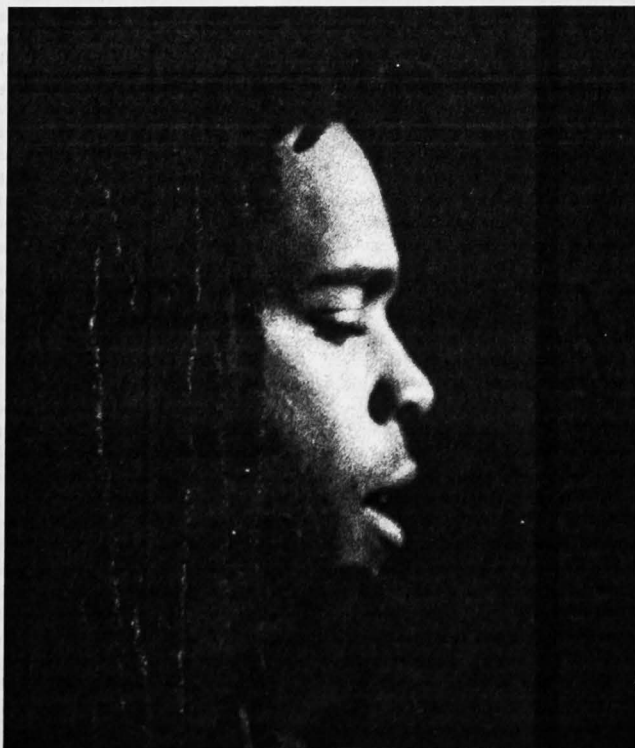
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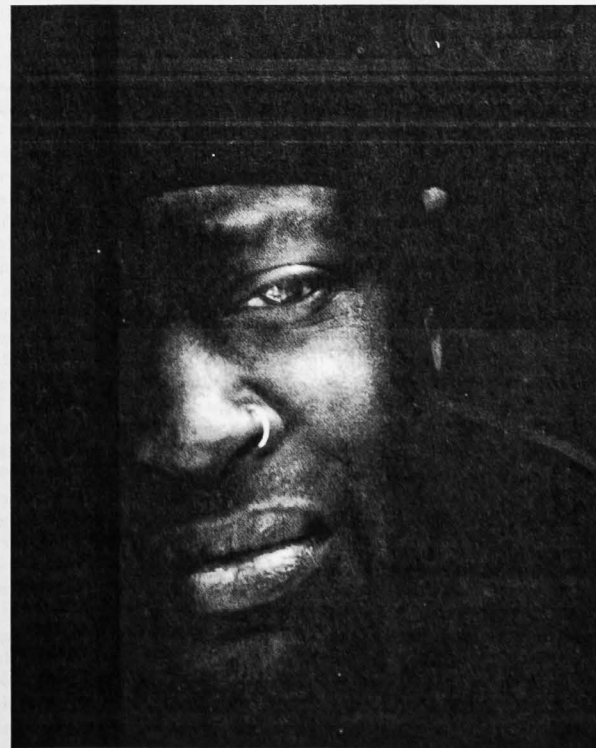
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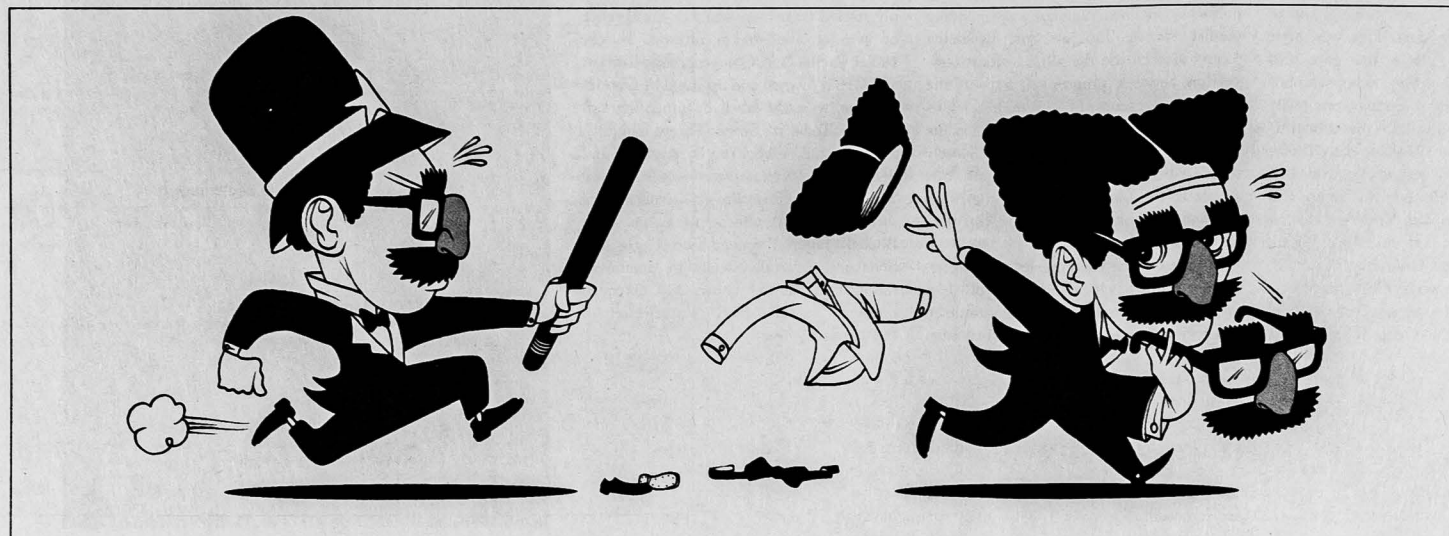


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A Story Born Every Minute

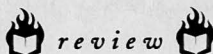
Stephen Glass Confounds the Fact-Checkers Once Again with Latest Bulletin from the Land of Make-Believe



THE FABULIST

By Stephen Glass

New York: Simon & Schuster
2003



BY PAUL MALISZEWSKI

Stephen Glass is infamous for the wrong reasons. Media critics, professors of journalism, and his fellow reporters have pored over the published work of the former writer for *The New Republic*, who, in 1998, was fired for fabricating some or all of twenty-seven articles. Such scrutiny would appear justified if the writing in question was, say, the sonnets of Shakespeare or the overblown novels of some forgotten Nobel Prize winner. After all, only a tiny portion of history's first draft can bear the attention of even a second reading in the evening, after work. Yet in the rush to understand how and why Glass fooled so many people so many times, his professional readers have lavished their critical interest on thin fare like "Hack Heaven," about a petulant, fifteen-year-old computer hacker holding a software corporation over a barrel, and "Peddling Poppy," about the First Church of George Herbert Walker Christ, a group of evangelical Christians who wander from the city testifying to their belief that the former President is "descended directly from the Messiah." Perhaps no one's journalism has received as close a reading as Glass's. But while Glass's critics may read closely, most misunderstand wildly and choose to view his rise and subsequent downfall as a tragedy or, as *Washington Post* media critic Howard Kurtz described it, "a cautionary tale." Kurtz and others derive from Glass's performance (brilliant, but flawed) and its various reenactments—the feature articles in *Vanity Fair* and elsewhere, a new autobiographical novel by Glass, and soon, a movie about him—a series of object lessons and tidy morals. By making a student show of dismissing Glass, an individual who dared to break their rules, they comfort themselves and fortify their profession, but leave unquestioned the fundamentals of journalism.

Glass's article about the hacker did him in, finally. An editor at the website for *Forbes* magazine upbraided one of his reporters for letting a stand, inside-the-beltway magazine scoop them on a hot story about the software industry, so the reporter started asking questions. When he couldn't locate a single source Glass used, when the phone number for this "big-time software firm" in California turned out to be a cell phone in Delaware, registered to Glass's brother, and nothing else checked out, the *Forbes* reporter contacted *The New Republic* and asked them to explain.

Glass's exposure inspired a great deal of melodramatic soul-searching among media folk. Writing in *The Boston Globe*, Tom Rosenstiel, the director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, laid out a high-minded, four-step manifesto and called for newspapers, magazines, and TV news bureaus to preserve the "historic standards of journalism" by returning to the values that made the profession great:

Step 3: A news organization must make these values clear to the audience—in effect, making a covenant with the public about what it stands for.

This covenant is critical. It is the only way for the audience to fairly judge what it thinks of a news organization. It is also the only way for journalistic values to matter to the bottom line.

The Houston Chronicle went back even farther, to the very basics, writing, "...there is one question that people in the news business should never have to wrestle with. It is never OK to report falsehood and fiction as fact." Even *USA Today* got in on the action, glumly editorializing, "The wreckage of journalistic integrity continues apace.... The compact [between readers and the media] lies in tatters nationally." *American Journalism Review* looked for and eventually located a silver lining, albeit a small one: "The press is being held more accountable. By the press." Hairshirts worn two sizes too tight were the height of summer fashion that year among writers and editors along the Eastern seaboard. This was due, in part, to the sheer fragrance of Glass's fabrications and what everyone saw in hindsight as the outrageousness of his inventions. See, for example, the Monicondom, a prophylactic specially designed for oral sex and poised to capitalize on what Glass called an exploding industry in memorabilia inspired by Monica Lewinsky's and President Clinton's gettings-on. But the media's exorcism of itself was due also to the fact that Glass was not some obscure freelancer struggling on the fringes of magazine writing; he was one of them, and up until the discovery of his serial fabrications, he had been their darling, publishing prominent features in *Rolling Stone*, *Harper's*, and *George*—remember *George*?—all of which proved later to be fiction to some extent. When Glass was fired, articles by him were ready to run in upcoming issues of *Mother Jones* and *The New York Times Magazine*, editors at both magazines did a little more fact-checking and decided it best to kill the features. Because Glass got around, editors and writers had good reason to want to make sure there was enough crow for all.

Glass was a brilliant storyteller, or so his story goes. His articles burst with the sort of feverish, anxious invention that sometimes can seem like life. A typical Glass story focused on a colorful, eccentric character. In one fabricated article, the director of a public-interest organization dedicated to good nutrition dissected his sweet-and-sour chicken with an absurd "surgico-priestly air" as Glass sat interviewing him. Glass delivered snappy dialogue, too, always managing to capture that bland of speech in which the subject has no clue what an ass he's making of himself. There is, for example, the bond trader who worships Alan Greenspan, asking the Chairman for guidance on bullish days—"When things go well, I hold the Greenspan picture between my two hands and say 'thank you'"—or bearish ones—"When things go poorly, I also take the photo in my hands and pray." A Glass article is chockablock with quirky and comic details. At the National Memorabilia Convention, a fictional event, a vendor hawked a computer game where the object is to guide Lewinsky from her apartment in the Watergate Hotel to the Oval Office. A few booths down, another vendor is selling the new inflatable sex doll that recites racy bits from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Glass also has the luck to witness dramatic scenes as they're unfolding. In one declared fake, Democratic staffers file down into the basement of a house, for the secret unveiling—at midnight, naturally—of their homemade "Newt-O-Meter," a device that tabulates the

amount of money the former Speaker of the House owes for his ethical violations. Elsewhere in the naked city, young Republicans, wasted and restless, hatch schemes to find an ugly woman and really, like, embarrass her, all in the presence of the intrepid reporter. When Glass was working at the height of his powers, he included each of these elements in one economical lead paragraph.

Jack Shafer, writing for *Slate* shortly after Glass was fired, explained what he felt made Glass's writing so special and singular, so Glass-ian. He turned in "stories with energy and imagination and originality," Shafer said.

The filigree of detail dazzles. Some of his better pieces read like textbook examples of New Journalism, fusing the world of fact with the literary power of narrative. He doesn't just write about teen-age hackers, he tracks a pimply member of the species down to his Bethesda home where a software company is signing him to a contract. He interviews the adoring mom. Leaving aside the question of whether it's really that great an accomplishment, when writing about an adolescent, to go the extra mile and interview the adolescent's mother, Shafer identifies the wrong source of Glass's uniqueness. What Shafer misses is that Glass's wild inventions form a thin skin stretched over a fairly standard body of accepted truth and mainstream opinion. Glass's imagination is not, in other words, all that original. It is in fact crushingly banal. How else to explain his production of so many fabrications that deliver, in story after story, the shared assumptions of the editorial class in new and perhaps slightly surprising forms?

That bond trader and his buddies, however quirky their habits (another is busy testing a hand-held urinal so he won't ever have to get up from his desk and miss an important phone-call), all serve to illustrate just one central and comparatively drab point, a point that Glass and his coauthor for that article, Jonathan Chait, felt bore repeating, over and over: Alan Greenspan is a powerful man who makes important decisions that affect the economy, and as a consequence, people treat him with the deference shown a god walking among mortals. This point is not new. It is not original or imaginative. It does not quite dazzle. It is, instead, a given. It is a common assumption, and it reads, in its simplicity and naïveté, like the thesis statement for an eighth-grade social studies report. Proposed thus to an editor, that editor would pass, without a second thought. But were the point, widely assumed to be true, found embodied in the behavior and antics of a group of bond traders, and then brought to life in a well-appointed corporate setting, with the reporter promising he can gain rare access to the palace of the privileged, that same editor might express some interest. Glass's talent lay less in the originality of his imagination than in his solicitous ability to seize on whatever the conventionally wise were chatting about at cocktail parties and repackaging it in bright, new containers, selling the palaver right back to them. Nobody was the wiser.

With the recent publication of Glass's novel, *The Fabulist*, his flair for animating stereotypes, letting clichés inhabit human bodies, and ordering characters to stand in for lazy

ideological assumptions becomes more evident. His novel tells the story of a reporter, named Stephen Glass, who works at *Washington Weekly*, a contentious and feisty magazine of politics and opinion not so much based on *The New Republic* as carefully traced and then colored in a bit more garishly. Glass, only occasionally roused to something reminiscent of satire, sends up some of the real magazine's counterintuitive cover articles, inventing two all-too-plausible ones: "Clinton: Our Most Moral President" and "The Case for Being out of Shape." "Glass," like Glass, fabricates a story, gets caught, has a lot of explaining to do, tries to lie his way out of the jam, falls apart, and then is fired. "Glass" discloses how his life was in shambles and how journalists tormented and stalked his every movement. "Glass" instantly despises everyone once he can no longer count himself among them. "Glass" details how he found enlightenment in a lap-dance and, later, learned a little something about himself during a trip to a massage parlor with his brother. In no time "Glass" gets his life back together, finds a job as an assistant manager at a video store—the real Glass graduated from Georgetown Law School and was offered an appointment to a prestigious clerkship—then rediscovers god, and, of course, falls in love. "Glass," unlike Glass, also explains himself. Where Glass has, before the publication of his book, never granted an interview, "Glass" tells his side of the story.

That story of reads, in part, like one long, not terribly productive therapy session and, in other parts, like the script to a cancelled sitcom. All the parts are rife with clichéd language. Of a girlfriend, Glass writes, "her pixie blond hair and gamine charm go straight to my heart: I can't believe how fortunate I am to be with her." Situations in the novel end predictably. When "Glass" and she of the pixie hair travel to Savannah, Georgia, for a Valentine's Day date, they visit Johnny Mercer's grave, and "Glass" is inspired to sing her the only song by Mercer he knows. When he's done, his girlfriend looks at him "lovingly," runs her hand through his hair, and then asks him "to promise never, ever to sing to her again." This is sitcom timing, the way a gag rushes sentimentality off the stage, and no characters will let tenderness linger between them for longer than a couple of beats. It's no surprise, but nonetheless disarming when characters compare what befalls them in the book's climactic scene to something on *ER* and then, when their predicament worsens, a horror movie. "Glass" meanwhile reflects on how his life seems increasingly like a TV show.

However small the screen of his life, for "Glass" self-discovery is the only order of the day. His father mails him an article about his fabrications, written by an older journalist who got his start in journalism by working the police beat for a small newspaper. The older journalist believes what "Glass" did is indicative of a younger generation of journalists, a careless and blindly ambitious. When he finishes the article—"Glass" calls it a screed—he says, "I agreed with a lot of it, but I resisted even thinking anything so critical of journalism: It felt too much like kicking the victim. Whatever larger lessons might be drawn from my predicament, I wanted to concentrate on the small ones: the lessons I hoped could someday help me make a new life."

All this concentration—a more accurate but less gentle word for it might be "indulgence"—paid to his inner life does take its toll on the lives of other people in the novel and the

world they inhabit. It is Glass's world, finally, and they're stuck in it until the end. One of Glass's explanations for why he fabricated characters and stories is that he wanted the world to appear as he imagined it. "I was describing the world, I knew even then, as I wished it to be," he writes, "not as it was." His impulse here is an idealistic one, perhaps even utopian, but what's troubling is how, exactly, Glass and "Glass" apparently wish the world to be.

The worlds described in the novel and Glass's collected fabrications are cartoons, in which people's emotions, thoughts, and convictions are governed by strict rules inherited from movies and television programming. His characters' lives seem ideally put to a soundtrack of sing-song music (for happy times) and raspberry sounds (for sad ones). "Glass" gets embroiled in all sorts of madcap hijinks and hilarity that would not be out of place in any televised life, including but not limited to dressing like the woman whose voice he's trying to fake in order to get into character, wearing his girlfriend's underwear so as not to wake her by getting his own, wearing a garbage bag when his girlfriend's underwear rips, and going swimming with a group of mah-jong-playing elderly women while wearing—no, not the garbage bag—a Speedo owned by a woman's deceased husband. Elsewhere, she of the gamine charm "believed you were never as free as when you were sitting in a weekday matinee." Last time I checked, Annie Hall believed that, too. Late in the book, "Glass" loses his job at the video store (he's fired for being honest, for doing the right thing...so touching), and feels angry as he drives home because the weather is sunny and bright. "...all I could think was, Why can't it rain? It's supposed to rain at times like this," he writes.

In the movies, in books, on TV, in Shakespeare's plays the weather replicates the content of the story—but not now. The sun, the goddamn luminous sun, beamed down on me in all my misery.

How ironic.

The people in Glass's journalism fare no better. The pickiness of the man with the sweet-and-sour chicken is meant, not subtly, to undermine his political beliefs and make his lifelong goals for clearer nutritional information on food and a public better educated about their diets look as silly as his obsessive and bizarre table manners. In another article, Glass introduces us to a man who thinks Successories, the company that prints those dreadful "Teamwork" posters, showing a crew team rowing down a river, or "Quality," showing a lone jogger, is in part responsible for his business's growth and his personal well-being. The man cannot merely think this, however, as untenable as it is. No, in Glass's world he must take his belief to absurd lengths, and Glass obliges with descriptions of how "his eyelids drop halfway, almost as if in prayer," and how his "lips curl into a slight, beatific smile." In another article, at a conference to discuss Ronald Reagan's legacy, two academics hold opposing views regarding the president's support for aid to the Nicaraguan Contras. Their beliefs and differences, not represented in the article, draw them "into a shoving match in the cafeteria, knocking over trays of food." A woman in Chicago who supports the budget-balancing ideas of Paul Tsongas and Warren Rudman and the rest of the Concord Coalition displays a large portrait of Tsongas ("the messianic man with the wise, sorrowful eyes, eyes that look deep into your sinning soul") on the wall of her home.

These are all cartoons of belief, and Glass treats his believers—any activist, really, or marginal subculture—like dupes, made to look foolish for the mere fact of their disagreement and opposition. What's more Glass uses the marginal groups—his articles are riddled with fictional NGOs and lobbying groups—to confirm the continued validity of his assumptions: the resistance remains small, the powerful face no real challenges. Glass condescends to this minority of believers as if they were a primitive tribe, there for him to study and display, squatting in the mud now, then superstitiously rubbing their idols and mumbling their useless and unintelligible magic words, as the real business of politics marches on without them.

After the discovery of Glass's misdeeds, various critics pointed their fingers at Glass and *The New Republic*, seeking there answers to the question—the perennial question whenever such scandals occur—*Why did he do it?* Glass was an over-achiever, they said. Glass's parents thought journalism not a worthy pursuit for their son and hounded him to do better. Others said *The New Republic's* editors were too young. Its writers were inexperienced and promoted too quickly. Its fact-checking department was too small, part-time, and overtaxed by the publication of a weekly magazine. Glass, they said, helped reform the very department, thus possessing the necessary inside information on how best to deceive them.

None of the explanations washed, really. Each suggested an easy fix or quick remedy. Just hire more fact-checkers and have them work full-time. What could be easier? Editors too young and inexperienced? Well, get older and more experienced ones and, please, whatever you do, keep the young ones on a shorter leash. Problem solved. Now let's get back to doing what we've always done best: reporting the truth. The explainers had this wonderful knack for leaving the institution of journalism standing in favor of making a public example of the profession's most public offender.

Fake journalism, however, did not begin and end with Glass. Before Glass, speaking only of recent memory, there was Janet Cooke at *The Washington Post*, winner of a Pulitzer Prize for a series of moving articles about a young crack addict who didn't exist. After Glass, Patricia Smith, at *The Boston Globe*, and her colleague Mike Barnicle were fired for turning in fiction. *CNN* and *Time*, discovering the joys of synergy and collaboration, retracted a story they reported together about the U.S. military using Sarin gas in Laos, during the Vietnam War, when the allegation proved to be false. And that was just in 1998. Later years saw the publication of fabricated journalism by Jay Forman at *Slate*, Rodney Rothman at *The New Yorker*, Michael Finkel at *The New York Times Magazine*, and most recently, Jayson Blair, at *The New York Times*. Repairs made to *The New Republic's* editorial ship, however significant, somehow did not manage to put an end to fake journalism. After Glass, the pattern simply continued: journalists did wrong, editors were lax, and the profession circled its wagons against the new and latest malicious individual.

Fictional journalism like Stephen Glass's is essentially a careful imitation of journalistic forms. That is, the articles are convincing because they adhere closely to the unstated conventions, assumptions, and predilections of a particular publication, a particular kind of article, or a particular editor. Journalists who fake are extraordinarily sensitive to the ways in which their stories are a series of sometimes conventional, often routine forms. Most journalists though see the form of their articles as transparent, a clear vehicle for transmitting the truth of what happened—the facts—without affecting, altering, or in any way coloring it. Their form conveys the story but does not change it. This belief rests on a tremendous naïveté—or a willful ignorance—about writing and language. Fabricated journalism can tell us plenty about journalism as it's practiced today, if that is, anyone cares to consider it as something more than aberrant, the shoddy work of isolated individuals who just don't share the profession's values. News stories considered great, funny, heartrending, or dramatic that turn out to be fake make real journalism—the reporting done by people who play by the rules—appear, at the very least, suspect. But fabricated journalism also raises questions about how the profession prizes and gives prizes to stories that feature great characters and dramatic leads, literary qualities which may not be incompatible with reporting the truth, but that may, at the same time, encourage reporters to shade that truth a bit, at first, here and there.

The fakes are, in the end, all form. The content—the hackers, the worshipful bond traders, the crack addict, all the fiction—satisfies the formal requirements, those professional expectations and limitations that journalists work under every day. There are articles that cannot be easily written or are not practical to publish simply because they don't fit one of the accepted forms. And the accepted forms make certain stories easier to tell, those stories being more likely to be repeated, while stories that don't so easily fit a form, that don't, say, have a dramatic narrative shape or lively characters who say wild, unpredictable things, don't get written and published. At the very least, these forms create limitations that bend and warp the stories that reporters do write. Journalists and editors may, in the face of such scandals, drum the offenders out of their midst, then publish critical articles about themselves, and even form committees to study how best to maintain the profession's values, but making an example of Stephen Glass and the other fakers, as much as they deserve it, won't fix what's wrong. The exercises in self-flagellation, while certainly loud, will remain shows only, fervent displays of conviction and resolve, until journalists and editors look at Glass and the other fakers not as anomalies from their own, better selves, but as fellow journalists still, people whose work cannot be separated from what they do every day. What journalists need to accept, finally, is that what the fakers do is tell stories, and telling stories has always been fundamental to what reporters write and how they write it. Telling stories to readers, in fact, may be journalism's oldest value, outdating by centuries the guarantees of truth, objectivity, and "All the news that's fit to print."

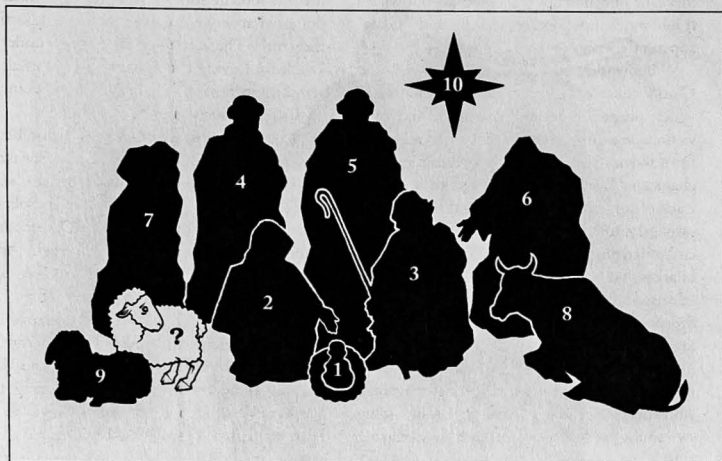
Paul Maliszewski's writing has appeared recently in *The Paris Review* and *Harper's*.



IF IT DOESN'T HAVE A SPINE, THROW IT AWAY

Cosell at Quarterback

A Critic Rises from the Armchair to Tackle His Own First Novel

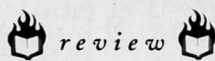


THE BOOK AGAINST GOD

By James Wood
New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux
2003

THE BROKEN ESTATE ESSAYS ON LITERATURE AND BELIEF

By James Wood
New York: Random House
2000



BY MARK LOTTO

James Wood has written a novel, his first. That he is, perhaps, our greatest working book critic goes a long way to making up for the fact that he is, as of yet, not much of a novelist. Still, it's disheartening to learn that a giant, monster brain armed with about a dozen lifetimes' worth of reading in the course of a one still-very-short one is no defense at all against the conventions and pitfalls of the debut novel. About Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, Wood once wrote that "DeLillo is not isolate; where *Underworld* fails, it fails collegially." Likewise, Wood's *The Book Against God* fails in the same way that so many first novels fail, in that they are barely novels at all. Their readers are often like early morning garbage men, picking up the bits and scraps of an author's autobiography that have been sorted out for recycling.

It may be to the dismay of many of Wood's fans that he has written a novel at all. This is not a fair complaint—the man, after all, is well come to do whatever he likes—but it is true. Wood, 37, has been a literary critic ever since he graduated from Cambridge, first at the *Guardian* in London, currently as a Senior Editor at *The New Republic*. Before that he was a young, happy, brilliant boy who spent his mornings sitting in church pews as the people all around him got up to shake and dance and talk in tongues, his afternoons brightly singing in the Church of E cathedral choir, his evenings filling secret notebooks with arguments against God. He makes no mention of the novel or verse that first did it, but we sense there must have been an apple he could not help but eat. "The child of evangelicalism, if he does not believe, inherits nevertheless a suspicion of indifference," writes Wood, "He is always evangelical." About literature, he is as passionate as a preacher. The witches at Salem were condemned with less vigor than Wood against Dave Eggers. And the man is no less fervent in his enthusiasms. (Moses, with his face still red, was less flattering about Yahweh than Wood is about Melville.) You see, possession for him now runs the other way; he enters into, and reanimates books, as a biographer might tiptoe about behind the eyes of his subject. What makes his literary criticism then so moving, so precisely illuminating, is that, like Virginia Woolf, one of his heroes, he understands that the study of literature is as much imaginative as it is analytic. This makes him the most like a novelist of all his fellow full-time critics. Certainly, his essays are as moving as most novels and make a more inspiring case for literature than much of recent fiction.

But then most book reviewers are basically assembly line workers. They rarely have the time or energy to do much more than inspect novels for defects as if they were mattresses or blue jeans. It is a sorry way to read a lot of books. Wood works as hard as all the rest, and rumor has it just as fast, but he remains one of the few critics (certainly one of the few outside academia) to develop an Actual Goddamn

Theory of Fiction, better yet, one that is not measured out by Marx, say, or mere snobbery. Even John Leonard of *The Nation* and *Harper's*, former titleholder of The Greatest Book Critic Ever, is too diffuse in his interests and his tastes to have a program much beyond enthusiasm. He just loves to love books, loves that books remind him of other books, and his sentences work like switchboard operators with their involution of wires.

Wood's read everything too, could guess at what Ishmael would hear from Hamlet if their ships met out at sea, but instead of bouncing between this book and that, he has devoted himself almost exclusively to the difficult, complicated relationship between literary and religious belief. In *The Broken Estate: Essays on Literature and Belief*, Wood spends a lot of his time lamenting the fact that, in the mid-nineteenth century, writers and theologians stopped thinking of the Bible as the living, light-giving Word of God, not The Book but a book, a fallible, human-assembled text; it was at this same time, for reasons not unrelated, that the novel, newly risen, self-impacted a holy importance. In this moment, the old estate—the covenant or, at the very least, the governing principle that religion was True, and fiction was false—shattered like a vase. "For Christianity, instead of disappearing, merely surrendered its truth claims and turned itself into a comforting poetry on the one hand or an empty moralism on the other," he writes, "Truth slipped away. And the novel...having founded the religion of itself, relaxed too gently into aestheticism." It must be noted, however, that Wood is as guilty as anyone when it comes to the disruptive and contaminative intermingling of literary and religious belief: though he seems to blame his atheism at least in part on the Novel, which helped water down Christianity to the point of almost *not being worth believing* in anymore, he has, like a hostage held too long, transferred onto the Novel all his capacity for belief, and all his passion for believing.

For Wood, the novel may be "the enemy of superstition, the slayer of religions, the scrutineer of falsity" but it is also our rehabilitation. In the opening essay of *The Broken Estate*, he writes:

Once religion has revealed itself to you, you are never free. In fiction, by contrast, one is always free to choose not to believe, and this very freedom, this shadow of doubt, is what help constitute fiction's reality. Furthermore, even when one is believing in fiction, one is "not quite" believing, one is believing "as if." (One can always close the book, go outside, and kick a stone.) Fiction asks us to judge its reality; religion asserts its reality. And this is all a way of saying that fiction is a special realm of freedom.

In other words, by making belief optional rather than binding, fiction will teach us how to believe again. It is the realm in which we practice our freedom to believe. With that, Wood reinvigorates not only our belief in literature; he perhaps reinvigorates our ability to believe in anything.

But reading his novel *The Book Against God* is like finding your dad inside the Santa suit. It makes agnostics out of us again. In it, Wood details the sorry, lame life of Thomas Bunting, a thirtyish doctoral student who has long neglected his philosophy thesis—not to mention his marriage—to lie about all day in bed doodling away at his atheistic Arcades Project, his *Book Against God*, that has now swelled to fill four large notebooks. (Imagine if Wood had never found book-reviewing, but from 15 to 30

simply kept going on his late-night anti-religious screeds.) That he is procrastinating on his thesis we can certainly understand, but Tom is also a pathological liar, a money-less snob, an intolerable prig, a lousy husband, and a proudly infrequent bather. It is hard to imagine that fiction could produce a character more self-righteous and even less charming than Holden Caulfield, but here is Tom. As Dostoevsky's Underground Man says: "People do pride themselves on their diseases."

There is not much plot to spoil. The novel begins and ends with Tom sitting alone in his flat, waiting, his father, the vicar, four months dead, his wife still packed up and gone, although by the end the Book Against God has become the book in our hands. In between, there is much discussion about the Lord Absentee or Almighty that despite its erudition and range of reference is not much beyond what you might hear over pizza in the dorm. And it is my unhappy duty to report that at the climax Wood resorts to that most horrid of movie clichés—the Speech Gone Horribly Wrong, in this case, Tom's eulogy for his father—and does not pull it off. The novel is a confession without an admission of guilt. Everything is spelled out, what's discovered we could have already guessed, and though he says otherwise, Tom is as much in danger of tumbling into the abyss as you are of getting sucked down your bathroom drain. It becomes very quickly clear that Wood's first novel does not live up to his own extremely high standards.

The Book Against God is not without its pleasures. Wood proves himself an insightful and eloquent reader of the world, and though the novel, as a whole, underwhelms, its constituent sentences are vital and sharp. We can only hope that someday every unsuccessful novel might include a passage as perfect as this:

Terry was silent in a way my parents never were, except when they were eating. Yes, that was it, Terry worked as if eating through his jobs, with resigned hunger. Silently he did his occasional work in all seasons: in autumn (which he called the "back-end"), when the laburnum shed its poisonous tadpoles; in winter, when the frost carried the grass; in pricking spring and in powdery summer, when each full tree, busy with sanguine birds, became its own forest. And all the while, I looked at Terry's hands, broad with earthy seams.

And that's not all. I would be remiss if I did not tell you about Tom's dad Peter, the academic turned parish priest, who places a sticker on his Bible that reads "This is an advance copy sent in lieu of a proof," who keeps a small notebook of all the things he is about to say hidden away in his desk, who came down upon young Tommy in the graveyard like a towering cyclone in his heavy black robes, but who held his hand very sweetly by grandmother's grave. In his reviews of Zadie Smith and Thomas Pynchon, Wood likes to rail against what he has dubbed "hysterical realism," those cultural theory-laden contemporary novels as busy with vibrant, disposable trivia as your average *Us Weekly*, but as absent of people as a mall after closing time. So much of modern fiction, he writes, is made up of these "curiously arrested books that know a thousand different things—the recipe for the best Indonesian fish curry! the sonics of the trombone! the drug market in Detroit! the history of strip cartoons!—but do not know a single human being." He favors instead a character-based realism, because he believes that great literature, at once penetrating and generous, searching forward and receding back into itself to make more room, is the best way we have to know another human being. If nothing else, *The Book Against God* allows us the pleasure of knowing Peter Bunting.

Wood has proven himself more than capable of making human beings. Each character who enters is given a few radiant, telling words. This for a woman who occupies only a page and a half, who comes for dinner and then leaves: "Muriel is very trim, with tiny black lace-up shoes that seem, as is often the case with old ladies, to have become her feet. It is impossible to think of her every taking them off. It is as if her feet are entombed in two little graves." But we wonder at Tom, who if anything seems a failed version of Wood. For those who have followed Wood's career as a critic, the experience of the novel is sort of like reading one of those old "What If?" Marvel comics, where Peter Parker was never bitten by a radioactive spider at all and ended up just a geeky 40-year-old virgin living in Queens with his widowed Aunt May. Writers, it's true, are as apt to torment themselves with their own degraded clones as they are to create aggrandizing "here's-what-I-would-have-said-next" fantasies: it is possible that in *The Book Against God* Wood created a man who shared his preoccupations but possessed none of his capabilities? Is it possible that out of himself he created not a Ulysses but some doomed shipmate?

Tom will be fine. Maybe his wife will take him back. Maybe he'll finally finish his thesis. Maybe he'll go back to church. He's a wreck when we leave him where we found him, but he's a far cry from tragedy. There is anguish here, but no kind of danger. Tom, a thinker of some breadth but no depth, and given to tantrums, makes a poor case for atheism, so poor that we wonder if this rotten jerk is actually a case study of the lapsed, now immoral believer. In his review of John Updike's *In the Beauty of the Lilies*, Wood wrote that Updike cannot really "imagine God's terrible absence from a life," and that furthermore "insofar as [he] cannot picture fervent theological fullness; he cannot picture fervent absence." Wood has imagined in Peter a joyful, generous, and sophisticated theological fullness, but in Tom "atheism" is diagnosed as a grandiose neurosis, a sort of arrested adolescence, not fervent so much as petty and selfish and small. Tom's issues are, after all, more Oedipal than truly metaphysical (the book even ends with a repressed memory all of a sudden bobbing up to the surface). It is therefore a revealing omission that Tom does not seem to be tormented by death without God, by the terrifying prospect that when we close our eyes we simply end. Wood gives us a dead dad, his son full of spleen, and a trip down to the grave but he does not give us *Hamlet*.

Charitably, we might say that Wood's inexperience as a fiction writer has simply made the narrative too flimsy a platform to support his weighty theological ideas; that the force and coherence of these ideas are lost when parceled out between quotation marks, among all the characters on the page. But then, the Essay itself is a precise, controlled form. It is easy to stay on target, and his reviews come screaming, furious, like jet fighters. The Novel is more like a large crime scene, and the author, whether he knows it or not, leaves incriminating evidence of himself scattered all about. Reading *The Book Against God* leaves us with the distinct impression that something has been disclosed, however unintentionally. "An extraordinary liberation" is how Tom describes that feeling when he first doubted God's existence at age 13. Likewise, Wood writes in *The Broken Estate* that "when he tore himself away from his belief in God 'it was like undressing. You are so quickly, so easily free.'" But character and author remain so absolutely God-obsessed. How is this freedom? Tom is like a guy who spends all his time talking to his new girlfriend about his ex. And Wood is not only a critic who wants to be a novelist, but may be, despite himself, just another distraught believer who wants very badly to be an atheist.

Wood will write more novels, I expect, and all of them will worry over God, who will keep quiet. He has written of Melville that he "needed to be braced against the flickering horror of his refusal to believe, and then braced against the sour clarity of his refusal entirely to unbelieve." This seems from Wood an unburdening of his own, but while his criticism is fraught with an avalanche ambivalence, he is, in fiction, not yet fearless enough to make himself or us truly, inconsolably afraid of a world that leads to nothing and No One. As a critic, he suffers like a saint, but as a novelist, so smug, too cautious, his hair shirt looks much worse than it is. And having now read *The Book Against God* we return to find *The Broken Estate* a diminished work. He remains a startlingly astute reader of certain authors (Woolf, Melville, Chekhov), all of whom have already been many times well read, but he has a very limiting sense of what the novel in its form and content should be allowed to do. His partisan preference for realist and high modernist narratives of belief or unbelief make him a weirdly powerful critic, but a proscribed and tiresome novelist. His fiction is like attending a rather too lengthy meeting of debate club, with each person assigned their point of view, while the very best literature, as he himself has argued, permits a bit of beautiful self-sabotage, where characters wander off to think for themselves, forgetting for a moment they are in a story meant to move forward. There are, after all, no rules as to what makes a novel good. In fact, there are hardly any rules at all as to what makes a novel a novel. It can be one hundred pages or one thousand, can cover the distance from the kitchen to the bed or from Ottawa all the way round to China, can visit pirates' caves or monster lairs, take in crowds or spelunk down inside a single person's head. There are some 615,000 words in the English language alone and an infinite number of sentences: you cannot say that we have yet seen the novel's limits. Wood himself writes, "What writer does not dream of touching every word in the lexicon once?" But Wood grants himself no real freedom. His *Book Against God* has only a small number of words for a small number of thoughts. He is like a man who owns a million acres but spends his days pacing back and forth across only one.

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Chicago's TRS-80 mixes breakbeat, old school hip-hop, downtempo, and electro rhythms with analog synths, samples, and sounds. Shake Hands With Danger finds TRS-80 light years ahead of their already futuristic repertoire. TRS80.com



Need New Body - 'UFO' [FT 44 CD/LP] Available September 23
Ravenous followers of NNB wait no longer! The follow-up to their F13 debut, UFO encapsulates the energy and experimentation that has been dazzling and bewildering audience after audience. neednewbody.com



Martin Rev - 'To Live' [FT46 CD] Available September 30
As the instrumentalist of the legendary duo Suicide, NYC's Martin Rev has remained one of music's most innovative and influential producers. His new solo album To Live is perhaps his most interesting work yet. martinrev.com



The Dishes - '3' [FT47 CD] Available October 14
Chicago's Dishes have a reputation for being unusually concise even in the realm of garage punk. By the end of the opening track, you'll have no doubt that 3 is their tightest and most nuanced album. thedishes.com



Sterling - 'Sterling' CD [FT 43] Still Available / April 15 2003
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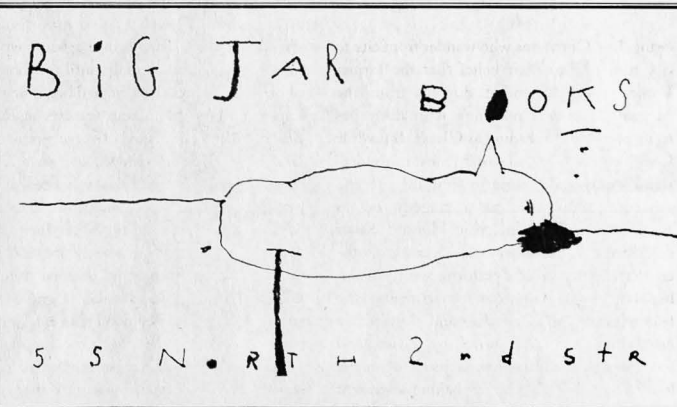
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Art & Letters

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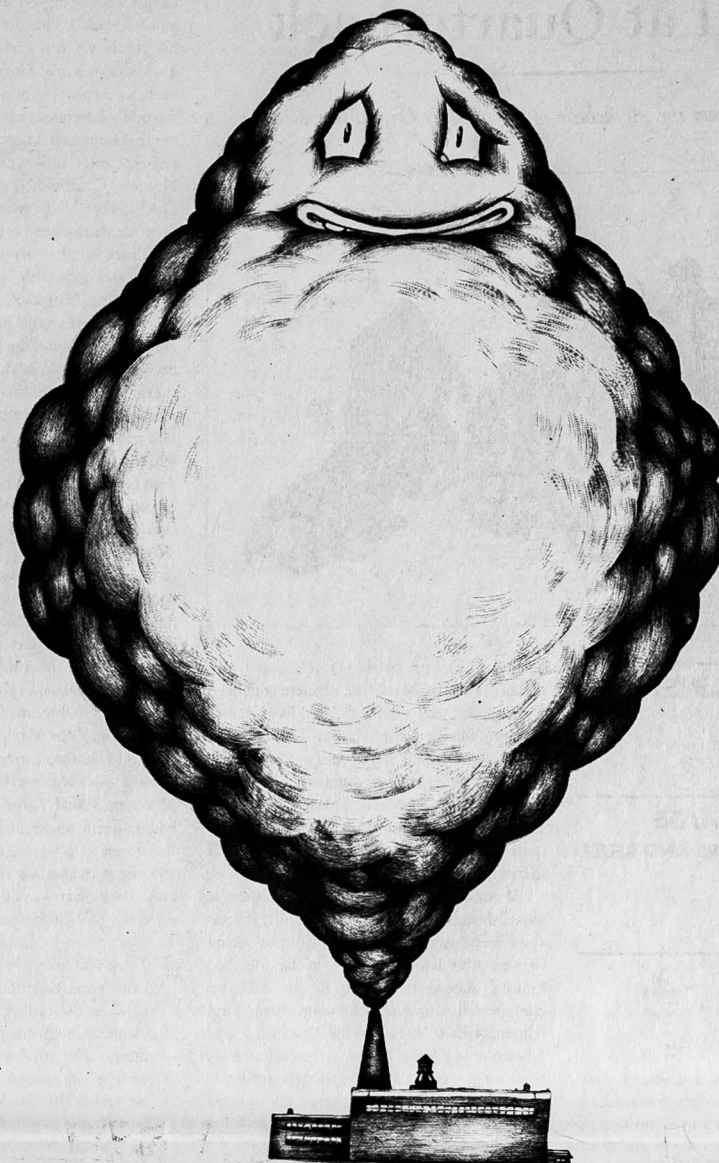
GARY BANTER SMOKE WAGON

**GARY PANTER** **SMOKE WAGON**

KIME AGINE



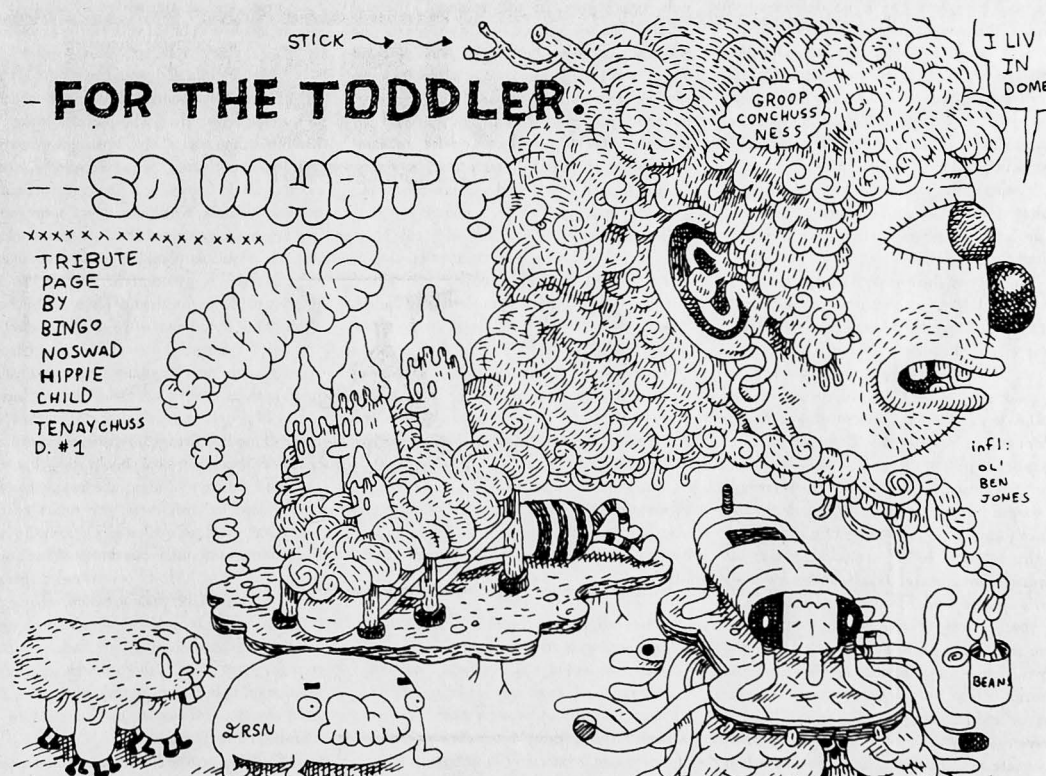
PEOPLE I've WORKED WITH



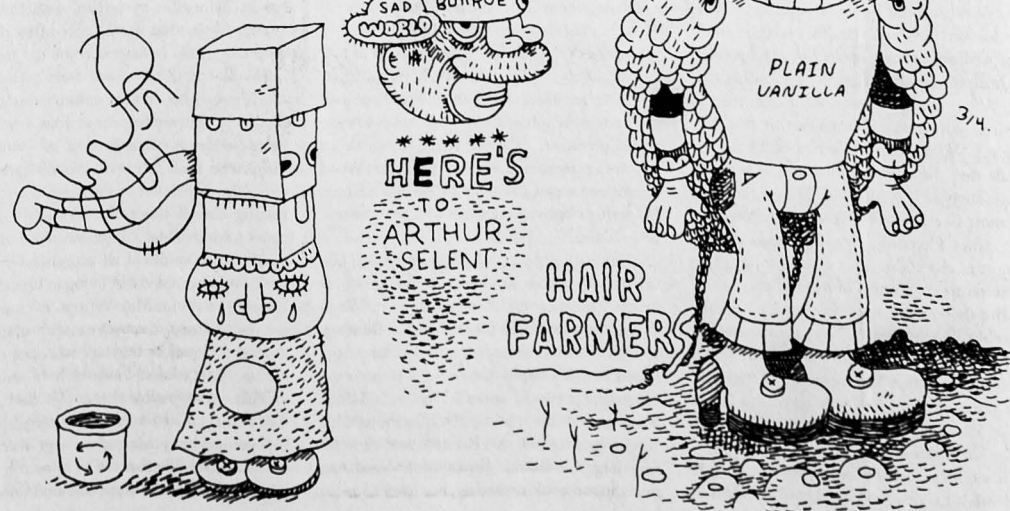
FOR THE TODDLER

--SO WHAT?

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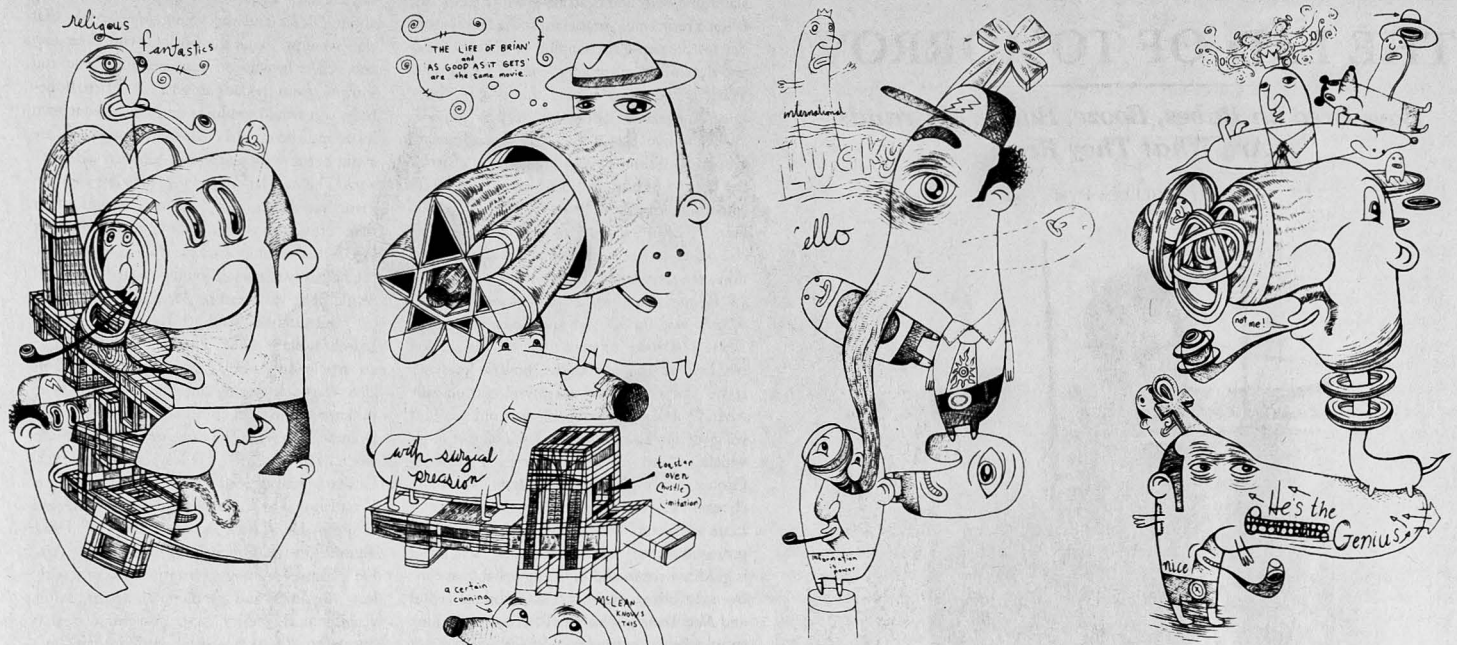


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PARADE OF THE CANADAS



Art & Letters

A MONSTER BORN IN A SMALL ROOM



PETER THOMPSON

COLD MARCH

the saint you're named
for, I tell you, had her
heart removed in spring,
or summer, salt air
what comes over the fields is bells
the shepherd, dead drunk, or dead
cloud glides like marble over the pond
what ignites in the dry grass is twilight
lazy shepherd
what comes over you, uncomfortable as truth
rustling in soil

—LEONARD GONTAREK

ECHO 1.

The train didn't stop for strangers. It went about its business of underneath. All the while bluish sparks hissed. The decision to stop was purely a company one. Strangers wear suits while strangeness wears fringed somethings. It is a good thing that full circle was invented—otherwise, no one would be left to complete the loop.

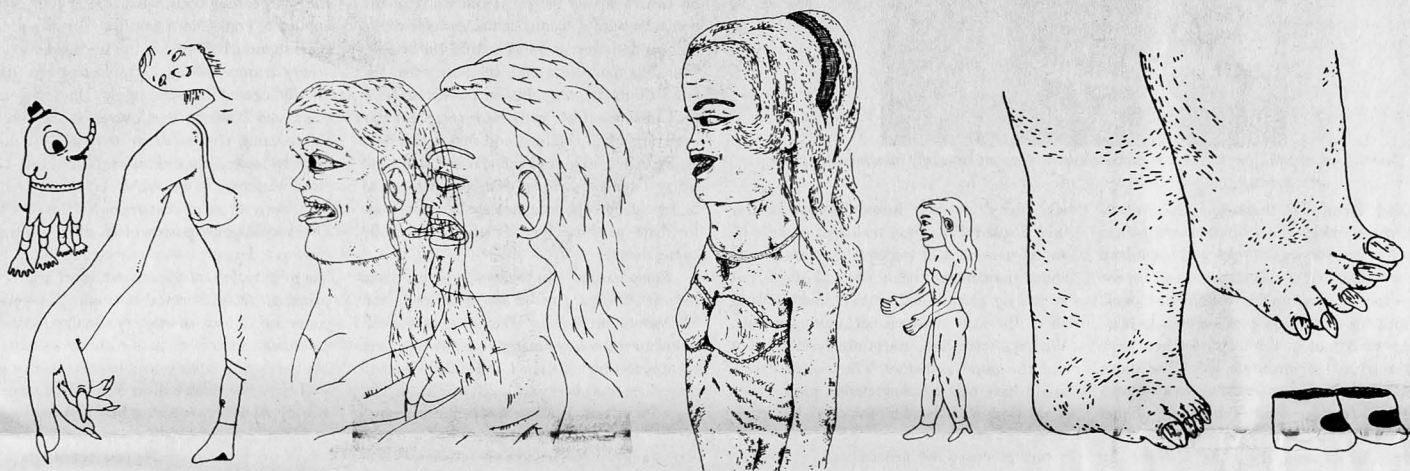
ECHO 2.

Nights had me floating from attic to basement and back again. I was so crazy they had to let me go. The white coats complained I didn't use the stairs. The stairs were cumbersome. All I wanted was a dog to sing with, a cigarette butt to unfurl, and a cracked skylight on a Tuesday night. Too much of a good thing will certainly force a tightening of the noose and a nudge down the steep flight.

ECHO 3.

The postcards I receive are always from Stara Zagora. Bulgaria's stamps have their own wings. There's no postmark; during arrival, they whisper to me. I store their whispers in my ear. I fieldstrip the cards and carve them into curls. The cards are hung in rows next to the tacked up yellow pages that list me as a deltiologist. It's a terrible waste of time, but at least I don't find bright colored butts in the ossuary anymore.

—ROBIN DARE



AMY LOCKHART

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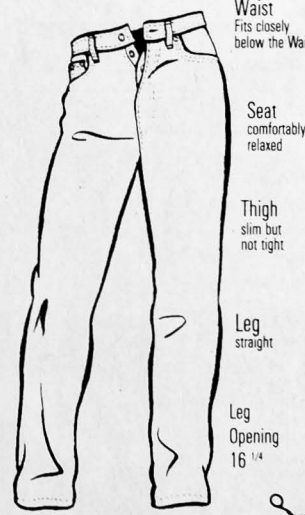
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GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT.

Ten years ago a former music journalist named James Brown founded *Loaded* magazine a trashier foil to the shaving, travel and pillow-soft porn of the professional men's monthlies, i.e. the ancient and unflappable *GQ*. Brown believed that London's twentysomething overgrown boys were making enough money in shitty banking jobs that they were entitled to congratulate themselves, relax and regress, to loosen their ties after work and go ape in the boozier, to neck ten pints of lager, to ogle and discuss fake-titted glamour girls rabidly and without remorse. Sounds pretty fucking nasty really but I'm putting it that way on purpose. On the magazine's spine it has always said 'For men who should know better,' which comes across clever and cool: if you're loaded with cash get loaded, no one can stop you, go for it, go mad, you rich sexy rotter. The 'lads' mag' was born and the dangerous new character of the Lad was unleashed on Britain. It didn't matter that he was an irresponsible chauvinist because unlike his older relative, the Yuppie, the Lad was jokey and unselfconscious and self-aware and of course—serious face—he worked hard for a living. James Brown, alchemist, removed all the guilt that might infringe on this boys' life devoted to hedonism. *Loaded* ushered in the greatest sales and content revolution of nineties popular publishing. It sold like crazy and its screaming design and colorful hybrid lexicon of old-fashioned pub slang made everything else on the racks look crumbly and boring. The magazine held frightening sway over the male population of Britain. God knows how women felt about it. Wow, yeah, if there was any uproar against *Loaded* it passed me by, for I was 13 years old and it blew my mind.

This may seem utterly inconsequential. Hold on.

Maxim magazine was the trend-spotting publisher Felix Dennis' rapid response to *Loaded*. Dennis made his millions in 1973 by cashing in on Bruce Lee mania with *Kung Fu Monthly*, and *Loaded*'s fabulously successful concept seemed easy enough to plunder and import. *Maxim* began as a knockoff, but its legacy will be longer than *Loaded*'s thanks to Dennis' greed and global perspective. In 1997 he decided to take the lads' mag across the

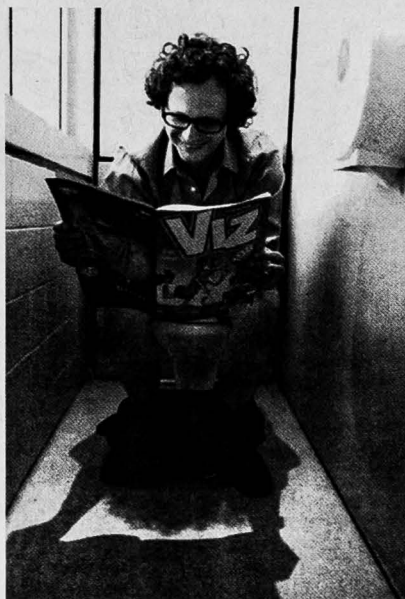
Atlantic and launched *Maxim* here in America where its success far surpassed the Dennis Group's already high expectations. In the last six years it has become a powerful global brand in a way that *Loaded* has never aspired to be, and last summer *Maxim* unveiled *Maxim Magazine* haircolor from Just For Men, a line of hair dye that advertises on television and buses and sells at Walgreen's. I've also learnt about the imminent launch of a Spanish language edition, though I've not seen it. Maybe *Maximo*, dunno. But yeah, *Maxim*, this is where you come in you poor dazed thing. Prick up your ears. I'm talking to you at last. If you've been in a men's college dorm in the last six years, you'll know at least one of the millions of generic whitewashed common rooms in this massive nation. There, under unhealthy halogen lighting on glass-topped coffee tables amongst prehistoric grilled cheese sandwiches, vending machine pop, beer cans, dog-eared lecture notes and tangled Playstation controllers lies a copy of *Maxim* magazine. The front cover offers a babe in imaginative swimwear with one name and an exclamation point ('Carmen!' for example, 'Britney!' 'Tara!' 'Mariah!'). In the course of a month the magazine is handled ritualistically and many times over. All the boys read all of it and loudly relay the bar jokes to one another, remembering them for future leverage in social situations. Laughing on the futon they convulse bonelessly. Crude grooming tips are obeyed chapter and verse and the boys begin smelling and shaving a bit better. A wreath of pubic hair might still line the sink and toilet bowl but lovely frosted glass dispensers and tins of gluey pomade make the boys feel hunky and together like David Beckham or whomever today's boys think of when they gaze in the mirror. For relief, they all wank over the same cover girl crumpet. I witnessed and participated in all of this, wanking included, first hand.

Last year, *Maxim*'s marketing men figured that a large part of their devoted audience was graduating from college and entering the cut and thrust world of desk jobs. Ha. Too old for titties and toilet humor then, *Maxim* *Blender* puts musicians instead of girls on the cover and claims to focus on critique and a refined take on new music. "*Blender*" is a fantastic name. I'm

THE LAD OF TOMORROW

Boys Bred on Babes, Booze, Bands & Brands
Are What They Read

BY WILLIAM PYM



James Brown, publisher of *Viz*, congratulates himself on an especially humorous caption.

thinking 'blend', I'm thinking a cool cultural mish-mash—inside the brain of a cosmopolitan man who has varying interests and is unafraid to put it all together and throw himself in the mix—and I'm also thinking 'blender' as in, well, the machine that college guys use to make margaritas when not in the mood for beer or if they're trying to intoxicate gals. The name *Blender* has the post-college male to a tee with a little bit of a desire for high culture (dinner parties) and fond memories of low culture (frat parties). Are we seeing the evolution of the Lad

with the deliberately mixed message of this title, *Blender*? Perhaps he no longer wants to be an out-and-out Lad; perhaps he wants to read about music now, to be urbane and have a shot at pulling professional women and thinking about the next steps; babies, mortgages, etc. Well, no, sorry, boss, you're totally transparent and the same as before. This month's issue might have cocktail conversation piece Thom Yorke from Radiohead on the cover, but inside there's a feature on sexy Jessica Simpson, who is an overproduced bubblegum pop singer with a

slamming body and beacons of white teeth. She is not a respectable musician; she is fantasy fodder for preteen girls bopping to Radio Disney and the similarly throbbing loins of grown men. What is she doing here if this is a big boys' music magazine? Elsewhere, *Blender* provides an exhaustive list of the fifty worst musical groups of all time. Compiling lists and charts is the bread and butter of lads' mags because it's something to argue about in a fierce macho way. It is fun and easy to read because small chunks of text are convenient for short attention spans and when sitting on the toilet.

Blender is the third wave of lads' mag, as *Maxim* was the second and *Loaded* the first. There is a score of new titles on the market that help me think about the "how far have lads come" question that I ask myself periodically when I think about being 13 years old and how we got from *Loaded* to *Blender*. There is *Stuff*, which is also from the Dennis Publishing Group and emphasizes on gadgets but is still chockablock with honeys. *Ramp*'s content is more advanced in some ways with threesomes, prostitution, etc., not for teenagers, then, but it is giddily written and indistinguishable in tone from the others. *Razor*'s clean, subdued layout and *New Yorkery* splashes of fiction might look swanky but a recent fiction piece is about frat initiations, so yeah, exactly, it's bullshit. I reckon *Gene Simmons Tongue* is the worst of the bunch because it flaunts actual stars for credibility and interest as a sort of lads' *Vanity Fair*. This falls flat because the celebrities that the KISS frontman and publisher knows are skin-flick phenoms like Jenna Jameson, the long-irrelevant Hugh Hefner, and inarticulate and unintelligent schlubs like Fred Durst and (sorry fans but he has destroyed his brain) Snoop Dogg. These figures are not notorious for their insights. How far has the lad really come, then?

Ramp has had two taglines in its five-issue history: "Taking guys to the next level" and "The evolution of man." They're trying to push brand-new moneymaking lad material but there is nothing new, good, to be had. The lads' mag: there was never very much to it in the first place. At its best, laddism was a spur to create a group with power and ideas: to bond and start something that belonged only to you and your

boys. That's all it was, a spur. The best thing about *Loaded* and the young *Maxim* was that they wouldn't do all the work for you; their success relied heavily on you spending time and learning from the lads around you. Then, hopefully, you would graduate and create your own jokes and dream girls. *Blender*, *Ramp* et al. are awful because they aspire to broaden lad horizons. The new lads' mags give lads less room to maneuver and restrict their imagination rather than setting them free. "Taking guys to the next level" is absolutely fucking ludicrous because the only way that a lad could go to the next level would be to stop reading *Maxim*.

John Graham was born Ivan Gratiyanovitch Dombrowski in 1886. Thanks in major part to an article by Anne Carmichael Edgerton in *Arts Magazine* exactly one hundred years later we know these facts. In his lifetime no one really knew from where he came or how old he was when he died in 1961. He was a terrific painter. Graham immigrated from East Europe to West Europe to America where in 1914 he saw Giorgio De Chirico's seminal "The Fatal Temple" in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. De Chirico's ominously empty landscapes with long shadows and ambiguous decomposing architectural relics are essential early Surrealism. I'm sympathetic with Graham, and De Chirico too, because they felt the edicts of the burgeoning Surrealist movement best applied to books, not paintings. This is a great relief to me. I believe that the so-called unconscious trumpeted by early Surrealism had already existed in painting for hundreds of years, and I believe that Surrealist art's great shortcoming was its desire to make art that actually looked dreamlike or fantastical, i.e. René Magritte, Salvador Dali, etc. Hey! That's wild, we're back in that men's college dorm! Dali and Magritte posters often add a touch of class to a decrepit common room. Anyway, I'd like to propose that the craziest, most uncanny paintings are the ones that employ the most conventional, human imagery. One keeps one's emotional distance from a painting of, say, a clock dripping from a tree, because it may as well have been painted on Mars. This otherworldly wackiness is odd at best and laughable at worst. The attempt to capture the unconscious world is impossible and unnecessary. It

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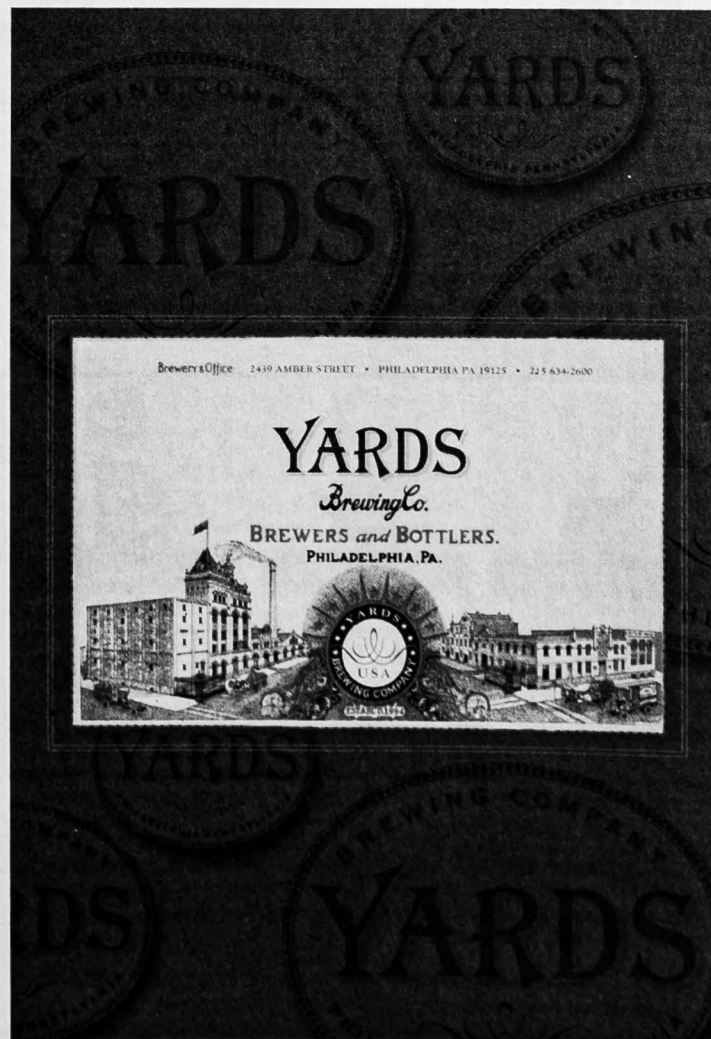
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COQUETTES & COKEHEADS

GARBAGE IS THE NEW GARBAGE

does not speak of the humans who first conceived it or the humans looking at it. Let me explain. Salvador Dali was notoriously vocal about his boyhood epiphany from a reproduction of Realist painter Jean-Francois Millet's 'The Angelus' from, at a guess, the late 1850s. The painting, a smallish work of a typical peasant scene in rural 19th century France, describes the angelus, a twice-daily moment for prayer that serves as a pause from the working day. A church bell rings in the background and a young couple, farmers, bow their heads obediently. The distant sound sweeps over the fields and stills everything in sight. The power of the church paralyzes people and freezes time. It's not clear whether we are seeing the angelus of six in the morning or six in the evening. The flock of flapping birds seems stapled to the sky. The simple reverence of humble humans transforms the world. It's a scary painting, it warps and compresses miles and minutes and personal and collective histories and though everything is on show—there are no secrets lurking in the composition—I have no idea what is happening. Well now, that's not exactly what I mean, I can pretty much see what is happening, but I don't know *how* everything is happening. It's heavy, man. This silent realist painting is bowing and melting with emotion and it hits harder than any of the Spaniard's melting clocks. A more melodramatic man would yell "There's your unconscious!" and wave "The Angelus" in the air. I say, what a fucking masterpiece. There's evidence that Dali's twisty, visually contrived Surrealist painting style was gratuitous. I'm telling you Dali fans and followers that what is in you is in you, don't worry about how it will make its way to the surface and don't push it. If you've got a mind don't worry about upping it. If you're a thinker, and it is you thinkers I'm chatting at today, have faith in the inherent craziness of your everyday life and the things in it and know that that is enough. There's a year's worth of my beefing about today's hippies in a nutshell. And there's a decent introduction to John Graham.

John Graham helped launch the careers of Jackson Pollock, Willem De Kooning and Lee Krasner. And David Smith. Arshile Gorky and Stuart Davis were his top dogs too, and he and Picasso had something weird and scandalous

going on because Graham had an odd relationship with the mother of Picasso's children. Francoise Gilot and (world's greatest living Anglo-American painter) Ron Kitaj attended to him in his final days. There's his pedigree, then, a spectacular one, and all the while he was this eccentric guy about whom no one really knew anything. His work is dense and sketchbooky, full of information and quickly

who cadged some of his ideas and inspired new ones so that their shared passions bounced back and forth over the years and continents. The people named above and many others helped him be himself, and they loved it and benefited from it. John Graham never considered himself odd and his buddies never told him he was odd so in the end how can his work be odd? It wasn't even a question of Graham



Jean-Francois Millet: The Angelus, 1857.

snatched thoughts while still clean and graphic. I would best describe it as a cross between Gorky, Otto Dix and Cecil Beaton, and if you don't know whom those guys are find out immediately. Graham had a strong affinity for the occult, African and Oriental Art, and, heavily, classical culture as evidenced by Greek epigrams scribbled down everywhere in speedy mock-etched letters. His stuff was all over the place and impossible to decipher, even by someone very smart like me. So why does his work work and make him more than just another self-fascinated outsider? Easy question. Despite being so nuts, John Graham had friends. A supportive, enraptured entourage

daring to be an individual, of being brave enough to be himself. Though it might look like it he didn't struggle through life as a loony. Friends gave him momentum and friends made him feel normal. Today, I think he's normal so there you go.

Eighteen issue-old *The Fader* magazine comes out six times a year and each new issue loves talking about the hot, hot, super hot topic. It's mellow and informed. It's not a breathless puppy trying to please you and why should they? You paid the exorbitant \$5.95 asking price, so you clearly aren't too cynical. *The Fader* fancies itself as the coolest kid in town. That's fine if they want to think that, I

don't believe it for a second and the heavy geographical bias shows that *The Fader* fades pretty strongly in one direction i.e. the downtown Manhattan scene, and there are enough media tapping that 'hood for power. The writing is good but not good enough and the attitude is 'fuck y'all' but not 'fuck y'all' enough and the bands they hail are hot but etc., etc. It's not extreme and unserious enough in its stance: it lacks the intent and focus of a lad's mag. More importantly, the fashion shoots are absolute fucking garbage, I mean very, very bad models, clownish styling and clumsy photography. Their overall estimation of beauty is the most depressing thing I have seen I have seen in a magazine for a while.

The September/October issue of *The Fader* features an academic article by David Greenberg, 25 year-old art critic, about Ryan McGinley, 25 year-old photography superstar and youngest-ever artist to exhibit solo at the Whitney Museum. Greenberg's genuflection is a bit much for someone still so young and I dislike his insatiable desire to coin and patent the next red hot art criticism term (the silly 'graphicism' is a Greenberg favorite), the article is well researched and will give you a lot of hard facts if you're in search of an informed view of the young success story. I'm not going to discuss Ryan McGinley much more. It's exhausting, there's plenty to read about him already, and slamming him has already gotten me into all sorts of trouble. Two things I will say, though. First, and I will keep saying this until it sticks, McGinley's photographs are no better than the ones everyone takes when they're rowdy. They're young men getting into trouble: the photos are impressionistic and light on their feet; the boys in them are vulnerable and beautiful and tough. We all look this fabulous in the company of our friends. Secondly, McGinley and his friends (subjects) are the closest things I have found to the evolution of the lad. They are a bunch of boys who share hobbies and pin-ups and interests and jokes. Their ability to muster up excitement together and have it reach fever pitch is their great strength, and they need nothing more than each other. They are unhealthy, unnaturally skinny and blast nose drugs constantly. They love getting fucked up and watching and par-

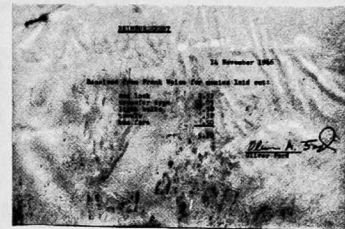
ticipating in pornography or injuring one another and themselves. These photogenic, tattooed gauchos love taking off their clothes when they get together and flashing it all about, homo accusations be damned; they are too pretty to care. They are moved by the same spirit as lads' mags, the freedom to indulge their every fancy. And they do so, perfectly. They gave birth to their own lad. Ryan McGinley's photographs are a perfect description of his world. Am I jealous? No not remotely. My terrific friends and I lead a life that is very different than his. We weigh more, and we live in Philadelphia.

Here we go, the future, yeah, this is what must come next. By showcasing unattainable girls and emphasizing a lazy, lager-loving lifestyle, *Maxim* magazine may have kept boys indoors and promoted sloth, but there was always the possibility that, like me, he could make his own (metaphorical or real) lads' mag. The next generation of smart lad is using the power of the lads around him to push, to rise to the top. Take those loved ones around you and what you believe and use all this terrific power around you to tell the world what it is you love. I wouldn't joust over the centerfold if you don't fancy her; it is quite possible that she is ugly. I wouldn't laugh at the party jokes unless you can't stop yourself; humor is a subjective matter after all. Don't take drugs unless you know that you want them; the last time I checked cocaine was not a known cure for depression so please be careful. You should use what's around you to make you happy and sane. Just look, there's plenty of stuff around. It worked for John Graham, it is working great for Ryan McGinley and you know what? It is working for me and I feel fucking fantastic. Graham is untouchable, but McGinley, we can totally take him on. I am not a hater, but let's do it yeah? Let's do it. Write to me at 1221 North Franklin Street, Apartment 3R, Philadelphia, PA, 19122. Maybe you should be in my gang. Until next time, then, love ya.

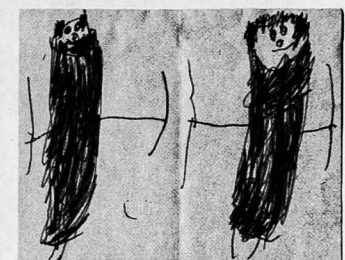
William Pym is a painter living in North Philadelphia. Writing as Louis D'Assoyne Mazzini, his bi-monthly pamphlets on fashion in the art world are available at Space 1026 gallery in Philadelphia and Rivington Arms gallery in New York. If you'd like a copy, write him a letter and say so.

FINDINGS

BY HENRY FLOSS



found at 307 Chadwick St.



found at 21th & Delancy



found at Broad & Nedo



found at Broad & Nedo

So, all I have to do is talk on my phone, I get paid \$10 each time! Yeah, and they only need 1-3 calls per participant. But, by me chatting on the phone to support scientific research I may have the chance to win \$1000! Wow!



The Linguistic Data Consortium at the University of Pennsylvania (WWW.LDC.UPENN.EDU) needs participants for FISHER, a new telephone speech study. The FISHER project will support linguistic research, technology development and education. FISHER participants will take part in 1 to 3 telephone calls talking for ten minutes to other participants on suggested topics. A robot operator will initiate all calls. Participants need only answer their phones at the times they specify during the registration process.

To register call:

1-800-380-PENN or
WWW.LDC.UPENN.EDU/FISHER

MAGAZINE



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Free Author Events

FALL 2003

Free Author Events are held in Montgomery Auditorium, Central Library at 19th & Vine Streets. No tickets or reservations required. A book signing with the author follows each presentation. For additional information, call (215) 567-4341.



Paul Auster

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Dick Thornburgh

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Tracy Kidder

TRACY KIDDER - *Mountains Beyond Mountains* Saturday, September 20, 1 p.m. Pulitzer Prize winner Tracy Kidder tells the story of Dr. Paul Farmer whose medical group, Partners In Health, combats infectious disease among the world's poor.



Maxine Hong Kingston

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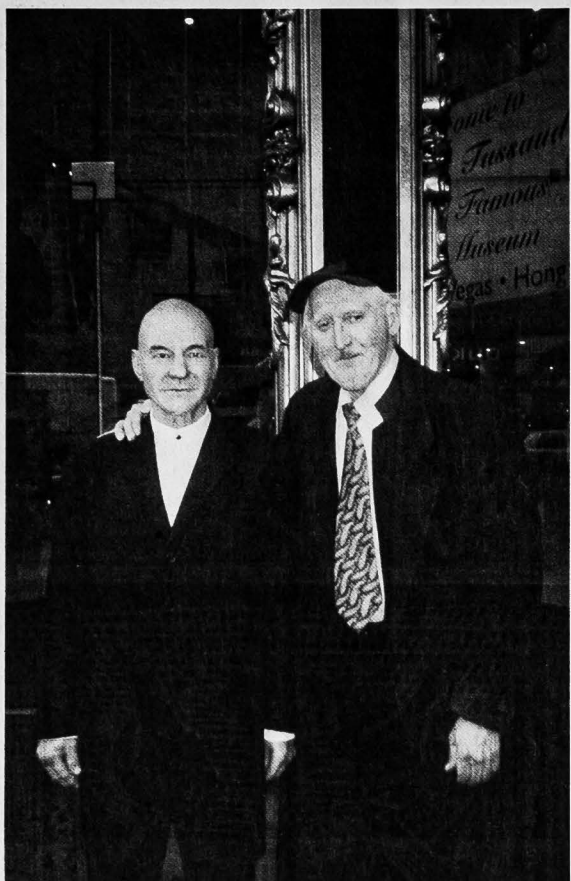
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COQUETTES & COKEHEADS

MAYBE WE SHOULD HANG OUT SOMETIME

SPOTTINGS

BY CHARLIE V



Patrick Stewart on left (wax), Charlie V on right

WANTED: ADVERTISEMENTS, PROJECTS, PROSPECTUSES, MAPS, PLANS, SCHEMES, MANIFESTOS, CHARTERS, FLYERS, PLEAS, ASSOCIATIONS, THE FUTURE, &C. DEAR PHILADELPHIA: The General Advertisements section of the paper can make your dreams come true. This is the place to announce what you're doing, about to do, or hope to do, or are considering doing. An army 10,000 strong will gather behind you. Your in-box will overflow with offers of assistance from heads of E.U. countries. If you need help, ask for it. If you have help to give, offer it. The General Advertisements are like the NASDAQ of yesterday, a special place where any kid can walk in with a half-baked piece of cockamamie (or a legitimate, fully-baked, sober and rational plan) and bluff his way to millions. Millions! This all was once a flyer. Post your flyer here. Take a breathe and summon the thing into being by enunciating the words that will make it real. I urge you, I urge you strongly, to take advantage of this opportunity immediately. Send your FREE GENERAL ADVERTISEMENT to ads@phindie.com by 5pm to run in our October issue. There is no limit on length but we reserve the right to take only stuff for sale, rooms to let, shout-outs, love yours, hate yours, help wanted, etc. Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. Use the classified as a message in a bottle, cast into a gray paper sea; or an ink footprint on a gray paper moon. It matters not, as long as you send your free classifieds to ads@phindie.com. Immediately. Now. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Sincerely yours, HENRY FLOSS, Auxiliary Classified Compiler & Compotroller.

ART CLASSES: Applications for an After-School Intensive for high school students now being accepted. Classes begin Tuesday, October 7. This eleven week dynamic includes practice in studio work ethic, weekly museum explorations, art writing, criticism, and theory, and exposure to a young and fresh contemporary insight on making art specifically in Philadelphia. Artist Elizabeth Rywelski has developed a curriculum to further develop individual style and outlook. She is currently seeking to form a very specific group of bright, interested, and creative young adults. For more information please contact: Liz@space1026.com or call 267-968-9670.

ARTISTS: Need slides made of your work? Art of all shapes and sizes expertly photographed for document or application to schools, grants. Reasonable prices, friendly service. Call 267-973-9508.

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE: Of this newspaper, Issue 1: \$15, Issue 7: \$10. Issues 2, 3 & 6: \$5. Issues 4, 5, 8, 9 & 10: \$2. First ten issues: \$35. Send check or money order payable to The Phila. Independent to 1026 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19107.

BAR WANTED: Somewhere cheap and quiet. Please don't rush the next round. Please pretend to recognize me, or pretend not to, depending. Please let me use you as my mailing address. Send your information to Bar Wanted c/o The Phila. Independent, 1026 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19107.

CURATOR WANTED: Plugged in person wanted to curate a zine and small press section and attendant events. No pay but a great opportunity to serve and hobnob with the great cartoonists, artists and poets of our city, and beyond!! Contact Molly's Cafe & Bookstore, 1010 S. 9th Street, 215-923-3367 or email mollysbooks@comcast.net.

GENERAL ADVERTISEMENTS

FOR SALE: Chinese reproduction chest, grey fabric cushion on cover, good condition, 40" long x 21.5" high x 22" width, roomy interior for storage, \$50. Call Peter at 215-417-6728, evenings.

FOR SALE: 2nd Anniversary 9/11 t-shirt, designed locally. Visit <http://mywebpage.netcape.com/tetroltshtinfo.html> for more information.

FOR SALE: 1987 Chevy G20 Cargo Van. V8 engine. 120k miles. Runs great. Brand new steering column. Lots of surplus karma. \$3,000 or make offer. Call 215-351-0777.

HELP WANTED: Hard-working, friendly booklover wanted to assist in all aspects of cafe & bookstore. Filing and organizing book inventory, cafe counter and some light prep, cleaning and customer service in the ambience of a used bookstore in the heart of the Italian Market. Must have a true affection for the human race, even the jerks, and a compulsion to keep shop. Part-time, mostly mornings (9 A.M. 'til early afternoon). Contact Molly's Cafe & Bookstore, 1010 S. 9th Street, 215-923-3367 or email mollysbooks@comcast.net.

KIDNAPPING SOCIETY: Nothing beats the thrill of having a friendly stranger abduct you from your routine and suddenly thrust you into a shiny, fast-moving world where nobody knows you and everything is new all over again, or even just hanging out in a closet for a few hours, listening to NPR through the drywall like a chick in the egg. Right? We are now pleased to announce the formation of the Stockholm Society, a private consortium of kidnapping enthusiasts who pair willing victims up with qualified captors, each unknown to the other, for afternoon nappings that may be fixed in duration but have unlimited potential for fun and high jinx. Victims: Send us the parameters of the escape you hope to make; how long and how crazy should it be? Captors: Send a letter of intent with your qualifications that prove your ability to show your victim a good time. The Stockholm Society will reply within thirty days. Upon acceptance you will be provided with coordinates for your rendezvous. Mail your letter to The Stockholm Society, c/o The Phila. Independent, 1026 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19107.

MIXTAPE COMPILER: Dear Public: Announcing a new cassette-and/or music service. Friends? Enemies? Secret Admirers and/or Crushes? Send them a ballad to let them know. Announce your entrance in style with a new theme song to blast from your boombox. Blast your political opponents with a scathing musical send up. Annoy your neighbors with a sonic boom of noise and aggression. Pump up the party with one of our scientifically formulated party songs, guaranteed to move the masses (the secret is in the beats). Anthems, instrumentals and even spoken word. Whatever floats your boat. We will even do sea shanties. Send your commissions including any instructions (e.g. theme, lyrics, instrument requests, length, style, etc.) to: occupational_athlete@yahoo.com Pollute the air with

songs for a song. (Cost of tape + postage).

PARTY: Do you like hot chicks? How about violence? I know you do, fruit cup. Mud wrestling every Thursday at 5th and Poplar. Regular weekly match pits Julie Cruely against Maggie Tragedy. Undercards to be announced. Inquire about tickets and fight times at crazy4swayze@hotmail.com.

PARTY VENUE: Are you planning a house show, but don't have a house? How about a house party? Are you awesome? If so, please send a letter to Rex Rawkus c/o The Phila. Independent, 1026 Arch St., Philadelphia, PA, 19107. We will work something out.

PERSONAL: I saw you. 2 PM. 15th & Chestnut August 25. You: cute brown skinned girl in turquoise w/ braids (I think). Me: white boy w/ sideburns in white t-shirt riding a bike. You said I was cute. It made my day. You told me your name but my mind was fluttering. I smiled all the way home. Let's get together some time. poetsgroove@yahoo.com.

PERSONAL: Husband wanted. Voluptuous, superbly talented, entrepreneurial Renaissance Negresse seeks sexy nerd, non-artistic husband to finance and supply location for home-based recording studio and publishing company. Your respectful letter of introduction gets my pic and portfolio: renaissance_negresse@hotmail.com. Potential suitors must adore Divas like Barbra Streisand and of course, Miss Piggy.

PROBLEMS SOLVED: Editor & Publisher for hire. I can report, research, write, edit copy, read proofs, check facts, fax checks, bounce ideas around, rock a little Quark even less Photoshop, help you start your own magazine, mow your lawn, wash your car, feed your pets, move your furniture, introduce you to the cat, answer phones, lick stamps, deliver bribes, issue threats, keep secrets, help your client sell more cigarettes to kids my age, fly your bombers, keep the oil coming, whatever you need, Sir or Madam, I'm ready to sell portions of my days to you and I'm not too picky about you use them. Twenty dollars gets you one hour, no lunch, no breaks. I'll even wear a fresh shirt. Email mss@phila-independent.net.

PUBLICATION: Delphic. Not you mama's literary rag. find it, read it, fall in love with its wit, aesthetic and vision. and submit—delphicsubmissions@mail.com. Now accepting submissions of fiction, essays, photography, art/events announcements, and even poetry.

PUBLICATION: Tom Foolery Number Five is out now. It's entitled "California: A Not So Short Story." The Philadelphia-based fanzine is 14,000 words in length and free. If you'd like a copy, simply email jeffpelly@aol.com and provide your mailing address. Jeff will handle the rest.

PUBLISHER SEEKS PATIENCE: Nascant and Often Incompetent but Always True of Heart Publishing Company Seeking Patience. We at Fort St. Davids Books need your patience. Yes, *The Pilot and the Panda*, that long promised novel by Erik Bader (that was written between

the years of 1998 and 2001) will be out by the end of this year. But why is it taken so long? We will tell you why. For one, we don't have a computer. We have a really old PC but we don't have that special and fast Macintosh that we need to design a long and gorgeous book. On the other hand, Mad Tony does, and he lives on Fifth Street in Northern Liberties (which we bet you have heard is an "up and coming" neighborhood. Well, it is!) and often lets us use his computer. But Jeff, his roommate, is in a band and also records bands in the basement below the room where we are designing a book and preventing Mad Tony from sleeping. So the Ft. St. Davids experience for the past few months has gone from a silent studios literary thing to a real and sweaty rock and roll experience. And hey: we're fine with that. We have listened to many good rock songs, often over and over, the same song, sometimes even the same part, and we have met many friendly members of bands, guitar players, drummers, you name it. We bet there are no bass players sleeping on the floor of Little Brown & Co., and that is just one of the reasons we feel that Ft. St. Davids Books is a unique publishing company indeed. A publishing company that you will get along with, that will do you right, that will provide you with the literature you need to while away your rainy days, your SEPTA commutes, and your nighttime lunch breaks (but please, only let our books accompany you during a lunch that involves a fork, knife, and very little sauce. A delicious hot corned beef sandwich at, say, Kibitz in the City, will make your hands very messy and we would not want to think of you touching your brand new and enjoyable book with those messy Russian dressing smeared hands. Look: just a consideration.) Some time this week we are going to take a picture that will be on the cover of *The Pilot and the Panda*. Our friend Maria Tessa is going to take the picture and it will probably be of streetlights on some quiet street in New Jersey. She's a great photographer so we really trust her on this one. And yes, of course we think it will be kind of fun to be running around quiet streets in New Jersey, at night, in early September, taking photos of street lights and radio towers. Who ever said work couldn't be fun? We still want you to reserve a copy or ask us questions. Both of which can be done by reaching us with your email account. Ours is theophilatdthepanda@hotmail.com. Yes, we plan on publishing other books if we can find a way to get our hands on some money. Two of the books will be Poetry, three will be Fiction, one will be Nonfiction, and there will even be a Children's Book. No, we're not kidding about the Children's Book, and yes of course there will be silly and colorful pictures adorning its pages. Steve Keller wrote it, by the way. Do you know him? Great guy. We want to do this. There are books here in this city that we feel are really quite good but you can't read them because they are not published. We plan on fixing this problem, by publishing them, and making them look nice, and then making it easy for you to have one. It will cost us some money to do this, and it will cost you some money to have the book, but once we have all chipped in, we will all have books, and once we have books we will all be happy. Can you wait? We can't wait. Thank you for your time as well as your patience. — Your friends at Fort Saint Davids Books.

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SEPTEMBER'S MONTHLY FORECAST

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 through **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13:** Geoff Sobelle of the Pig Iron Theatre company and Trey Lyford of The Civilians bring *All Wear Bowlers* to the Philadelphia Fringe Festival at the Mum Puppettheatre (115 Arch St.). The vaudevilian play features two characters unable to leave a clown show. Expect to witness jokes, dance, deep insights, and throwback headgear.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13: Philadelphia rock veterans *Three-4-Tens* celebrate the release of their third full-length "Taking Northern Liberties." Arrive squarely early to catch *Rifle Choir*, *Downtown*, and *Coyote*. North Star Bar (27th & Poplar streets). 21+.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23: Face Off of the Two Pieces: *Lightning Bolt*, a big loud bang of controlled and intricate chaos, and *Hanged Up*, a hypnotic viola/drums combo, plays an all-ages show First Unitarian Church (2125 Chestnut St.). Across town, *Hella*, a virtuoso guitar and drums two piece, and *Quasi*, a stripped-down lo-fi indie-rock outfit, performs for the drinking crowd at The Khyber (56 S. Second St., 21+). The gambling type may consider catching the Church show before racing across town for the twilight bar show.

AUTUMN: the time to bulk up on facts and knowledge. This season's lectures at the Wagner Free Institute of Science begin on **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24**. This year's offerings look particularly interesting, with titles such as *Natural History Since Aristotle, An Introduction to the Study of Insects, Ornithological Exploration, and Ancient Graves and Modern Cemeteries*. Each is taught by an expert and occurs in the evening, so day-jobs won't have to sacrifice work for education. Call 215-763-6529x23 or email case@wagner-freeinstitute.org.

WHIMSY'S PRINCIPLES OF AESTHETICS

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH; OR, ASSESSING ONE'S MAN-ANTLER

How one may determine his manly girth through the DEFLORATING of this NEWSPAPER and using the alleged CIRCUMFERENCES of great PERSONAGES, derived from HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS, WANTON SLANDER and the WHISPERS of COURTESANS.

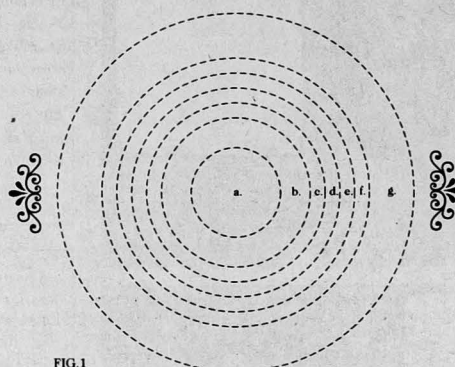


FIG.1

KEY:

(a.) Napoleon, Henry VIII; (b.) The Shanty Irish, Marquis De Sade; (c.) Mountain goat (Oreamnos Americanus), Lord Whimsy; (d.) Barbara Streisand, Martin Van Buren; (e.) Ramses II, and appropriately, Yul Brenner; (f.) Joseph Cornell, Most equatorial peoples; (g.) Momus, Andre The Giant

IT IS A WELL-KNOWN FACT IN THE ART WORLD THAT THE ARTIST Joseph Cornell was a deeply repressed perv. There exists an account of a young woman he admired receiving in the mail a small loop of string that the accompanying letter explained marked the circumference of Cornell's manly girth. Despite such escapades, Cornell by all accounts died a virgin - a silly, silly virgin. (Pity, since the woman in question was rumored to wear said loop as a bracelet.)

The human obsession with the size of one's "man-antler" (for what is the human phallus if not - like the lion's mane and moose's rack - a physical display of one's fitness and vigor?) goes back to the musky, steamy dawn of mankind, and has been well documented since the days of classical antiquity. The willes of old were often treated unkindly: when Egyptian troops invaded Libya in 13th Century BC they took with them as trophies a total of 13,230 phalli; and a stone relief in Thebes depicts a band of victors amassing a pile of 3000 phalli before their king. Since time immemorial, the outrageously feathered phallic sheaths and gourds used by the men of the Asmat in the Sepik River valley in New Guinea have been hailed for their dazzling, rakish effect. In medieval Europe, accounts exist about high-ranking noblemen in 14th century Europe being permitted to display their tackle below a short tunic; those noblemen who were not impressively endowed had the option of donning a leather false called a *braguette*.

One can only imagine the seething envy these noblemen might have held towards the average Blue Whale, whose members grow on average 10 feet long and one foot in diameter! Indeed, one wonders if the 19th Century whaling

trade was caused in part by an uncontrolled jealousy veiled as moral indignation on the part of poorly endowed puritan merchants, who perhaps couldn't stand the sight of their wives' gazes turning longingly to sea during uncomfortable pauses in conversation at the dinner table.

ABOUT THE CHART:

This is a somewhat cheeky, ribald device by which one may know the social standing of one's "zipper wookiee". It is the hope of this writer that this device might aid in satisfying curiosities and confirming fears. One will quickly come to the conclusion that this is surely a chart that tries men's souls, among other things.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Men: With a pair of shears or a cutting blade, cut out the smallest ring in the center. Attempt to fit your manhood through the hole. If one cannot find purchase, proceed to cut out the next ring until a fit is procured.

For those ladies who might have an abiding curiosity as to with which great personage they might find themselves amorously compatible: Place a small mirror face-up on the floor. With a pair of shears or a cutting blade, cut out the smallest ring in the center. Stand over the mirror and gaze at the reflection through the hole made in the paper. Repeat process until a good "match" is found.

SUBTERRANEAN

An Excavation of Underground Treasures

BY GREGG FOREMAN

Okay. This monthly column is an attempt to introduce some "underground" — by which I mean overlooked yet essential — items to the readers of THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT. Originally, I had been invited to write this column for a certain weekly paper, who asked that I write it in the form of "Hot or Not." After I declined, The Independent came along and gave me this forum to rediscover some of the lost or missing essentials of our culture, and in turn pass them on to you.

SOUNDS

Ike & Tina Turner
"I Want to Take You Higher"
b/w "Contact High"
Liberty Records

No joke, Tina burns Sly Stone's original version down to the ground. With throbbing bass and soul-testifying vocal delivery, this lost single becomes an instant funk classic!

for introducing the melodica to the genre), displays some of the finest soul-dub to ever be placed on wax! Pablo, also noted for collaborations with many artists, died shortly after his work with the British band Primal Scream on their CD *Vanishing Point*.

Val Shively's R&B Records

Owner Val Shively boasts millions of rare and great 45 rpm singles in his Upper Darby shop! Be forewarned: There is a no browsing rule unless you're able to get in good with the man himself, so try to know the label and artist that you're looking for beforehand. The shop is a goldmine, whether you're looking for Dyke & the Blazers doing "Shotgun Slim" or a copy of "Pac-Man Fever" for your young cousin Isaac's Bar Mitzvah. On any given day, you'll likely run into some British lads digging for Northern Soul and Japanese cats digging rare grooves on their portable players.

FILM

Various Artists

Rough Trade Shops: Post Punk 01
Rough Trade

This is the most recent addition to the acclaimed series of Rough Trade Shops Compilations. It brings together more than forty post punk and no wave underground classics. Includes cuts from the Pop Group, Magazine, Wire, the Slits, and the Fall alongside the newer sounds of the Rapture and Erase Errata. Some of the stand-outs are Gang of Four, James White and the Blacks, Swell Maps, and the Rogers Sisters.

Augustus Pablo

This is Augustus Pablo
Tropical Records

This recently deceased dub master (famous

For Your Height Only (1999)
Reissue on Simitar VHS

The tagline for this film is: "He's Smart, He's Sexy, He's Dangerous, He's ... three feet tall." This film follows Weng Weng, the newest international man of mystery, otherwise known as Agent 00. He may be smaller than the average spy, but when it comes to crime Agent 00 always gets the bad guy. When a ruthless gang steals the world's most destructive bomb and kidnaps its creator, Weng Weng must save the day. Whether surrounded by beautiful women or dangerous criminals, Agent 00 is never short ... of crime-fighting experience.

Gregg Foreman is a musician and disk jockey who lives in Philadelphia.

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collective voices festival IV
with lyrics by: dawn barry, bobby carroll, won't liberation front, smithsonian, toshi makihara, daniel paterson and many more.
various and literary
monday, september 22 | 8pm
dr. art davis and olean pope
art davis has performed with john collins, dicky glenn, and seto duby in honor of the 77th birthday. the duo will be performing the music of john collins.
upper merion hall | 3417 spruce street | free
tuesday, september 23 | 8pm
town and country
(live local records)
thru | 1510 south street
wednesday, september 24 | 8pm
tony malaby's apparitions
with other great (dead) indie acts (tours and tom rainey (drums) (second release show, post mortem's a.b.b. (bass saxophone))
thru | 1510 south street
thursday, october 14 | 8pm
ellery eskell
with andrea parkins and jim black
(live local records)
thru | 1510 south street
ars nova workshop
support creative music

LIQUID VOX BENEFIT
Thursday, September 25, 2003
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Power Plant Productions
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silent auction benefits
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THU 9/11
Kandy Whales
Stars As Eyes (Tigerbeat6 Records)
LoSix

FRI 9/12
My Pal God Records Night
Taking Pictures (ex-Hurt, Milemarker, Don Caballero)
Quick Fix Kills
The Heroics
plus DJ Jon Solomon (of My Pal God, WPRB)

THU 9/18
Refsonic (ex-Blueboy)
Pilot To Gunner (Arava Rock Recording Co.)
Pattern Is Movement

THU 9/25 • 10\$ • 8PM
"What I Like About Jew"

FRI 9/26 • 8\$
Brought to you by R5 Productions & Plain Parade
Chairkickers Music Tour
Black Eyed Snakes (members of Low, Red Red Meat)
Kid Dakota
The Teeth
Young People (Kill Rock Stars)

THU 10/16
Alasdair Roberts (Drag City Records)
The Espers
Brother JT

THU 10/23
Lions & Magicians
Low Skies (Chicago, Flameshowel Records)
Timonium (CA, Pahr Records)

FRI 10/24
"Broken Hipsters" Preview
The Sand Family
Like Moving Insects

THU 10/30
The Trauma Queens
Jukebox Zeros
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10PM — THE CISCO JEETERS W/ DJ "GINA JETER

Sun 9/7 — 8PM — GONGZILLA

Mon 9/8 — SLO & SHAKY

Thurs 9/11 — THE RETURN OF GLOBAL ILLAGE

Sat 9/13 — 8PM — A Fringe Event: EDGAR ALLAN & THE POETTES: Last Show Ever!

Sun 9/14 — Ars Nova Presents: BILLY BANG TRIO

Thurs 9/18 — HARD LIQUOR THEATER

Fri 9/19 — CYNTHIA G MASON TRIO: THE WINTER BLANKET-NORFOLK & WESTERN

Sat 9/20 — "The Collective Voices Festival" feat SONIC LIBERATION FRONT

Sun 9/21 — THE HUB (NYC)

Tues 9/23 — 8PM — Ars Nova Presents: TOWN & COUNTRY — 10PM — A ROCK TITS EVENT: Free!

Wed 9/24 — 8PM — Ars Nova Presents: TONY MALABY QUARTET W/ DREW GRESS, TOM RAINY & MIKE SARR

Thurs 9/25 — "SON OF TURNAROUND" W/ DJ's GREG FOREMAN & THE BROS. GAIEA

Fri 9/26 — JAMES BLOOD ULMER W/ CALVIN WESTIN'S BIG TREE

Sat 9/27 — JAMAALADEEN TACUMAS' DNA GALLERIA FEAT. JAMES BLOOD ULMER

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from anticon, member of FOG

Thursday September 18th 7:30pm
THIS DAY FORWARD ARMOR FOR SLEEP ME WITHOUT YOU

Friday September 19th 8:00pm
BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE
Canada, Ex-DeMakeSayThink

Tuesday September 23rd 7:30pm
LIGHTNING BOLT BATTLES
ian from don cab + moms of tomahawk
HANGED UP
montreal, constellation recs

Sunday September 28th 8:00pm
THE POLYPHONIC SPREE
26 member band from texas!

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Monday September 29th 7:30pm
SMALL BROWN BIKE COPELAND DAYS AWAY

Wednesday October 8th 7:30pm
MR QUINTRON & MS PUSSYCAT XbXrX

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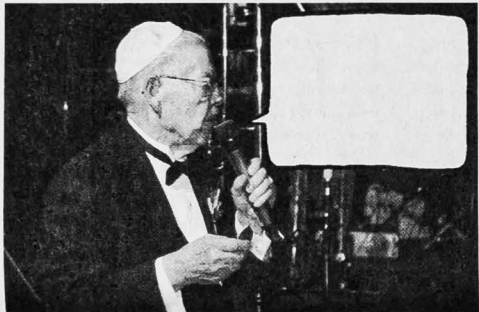
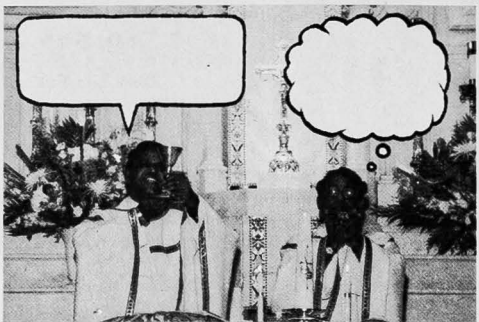
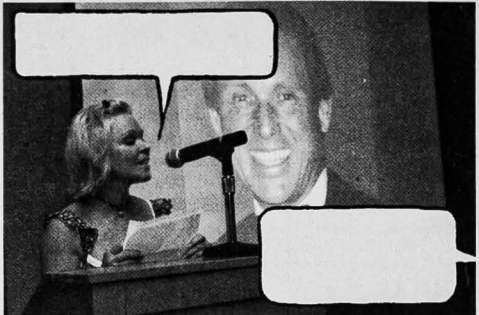
THE BUREAU OF PUZZLES & GAMES

№ 3: WHO IS LADYBIRD?

The Great Caption Caper

BY HENRY FLOSS

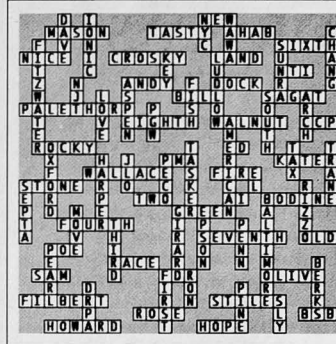
As a youngster in Junior High School, my brother Joseph Floss and I would avoid arithmetic by paging through a civics textbook and penning false speech bubbles. A crossing guard might say, "Put a sock in it!" or an expectant mother, "The villain is not a relish!" Such creative endeavors prepared Joseph for a career in stewardship, and myself for a life of puzzles. This month's puzzle is for likewise creative types out there. Provide speech for these characters, and mail the page to the Bureau no later than September 21. My expert judges and I will determine the winner based on originality, insight, and believability. The winning contestant will receive status in the Bureau, his or her entry printed on this very page, and an undetermined amount of beer, provided that he or she is of legal drinking age.



for our Beloved Agents of the Bureau... ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S NOODLE EXERCISE

THIS MONTH'S WINNER:

Grand Prize: Tina Bejian of 22nd Street won a fifty dollar gift certificate to Greasywaitress Vintage Boutique @ 3rd & Bainbridge, Top Secret Agent status in the Bureau, and an all-expenses paid dinner/movie date at the Taco House @ 1218 Pine Street with any member of THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT's masthead who is reasonably keen on the idea per the terms of Issue Ten, Page Sixteen.



Bureau News

DEAR READERS & AGENTS OF THE BUREAU:

These are exciting times for the Bureau. While we continue the work of devising games and judging completed puzzles with severe impartiality, we do so in the company of the newest addition to the Bureau: Agent Ladybird.

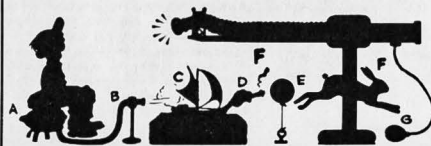
Perhaps it is her demeanor and attitude that inspires us most. My judges, other agents, and I are so entrenched in the business of gaming that we often forget the original reason for entering into these sacred offices. Agent Ladybird, however, reminds us with her gamine charms. A puzzler par excellence, this one. To call her "Office Manager" is yet another travesty of gross understatement committed by the higher-ups, akin to calling Martin Luther himself an "Ombudsman." She is so much more than that. She is a symbol of all that is good. I urge all Agents to take a cue from Agent Ladybird and make a game of all our errands, whether enjoying a meal, chasing an errant insect, greeting a comrade, or licking one's own feet.

I remain your dutiful servant,

Henry Floss

HENRY FLOSS' MONTHLY INVENTION

(Apologies and respects to Rubik Goldberg)



LONELY MAN'S SELF- PORTRAIT DEVICE...

Henry Floss sits on air pillow (A), pushing air through nozzle (B). The resulting breeze fills the proud sails of miniature Viking ship, sending it across block of ice (C) and thus moving cigarillo bowsprit (D). The cigarillo's flame bursts balloon (E), scaring Horatio Hare (F), who lands on camera plunger (G), snapping self-portrait. If the device proves unsuccessful purchase one mirror and one pencil.



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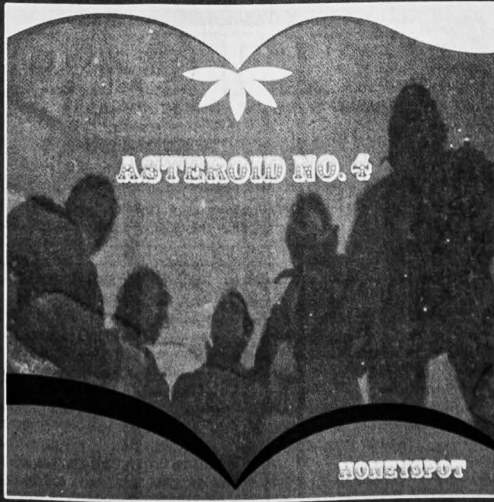
Lovethugs, The Contrast, The Telepathic Butterflies, Rockfour, Sidonie, The Gurus and Denise James

★ The Three-4-Tens "Taking Northern Liberties" from Rainbow Quartz Records and the Asteroid No.4's



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